

ALMANAC

**SOVIET
LITERATURE
AND**

ART

89

Designed by Vladimir Polyakov



СОВЕТСКАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА И ИСКУССТВО

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SOVIET
LITERATURE
AND
ART

ALMANAC

89

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a Writer of Tender
Conscience

Siberia, Siberia...



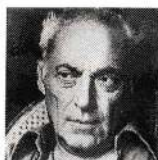
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LITERATURE

traditions
and changes

Natalia IVANOVA

o we know the society we live in, that is, ourselves? Do we know our own history? The press has been holding forth about "our Soviet democracy" for decades, but we are now bitterly convinced that we have not yet worked out even its bare rudiments... *

Our society today lacks precise and profound knowledge of a wide range of problems. We are not exactly clear about our own health, ecological situation and culture. Every day we become aware of new gaps in our information on ethnic problems and territorial claims connected with them, be they "the black holes" in the past or "the blanks" in the present. Paradoxical as it may seem, the more we learn about the once forbidden or hushed-up issues, the broader our "field of ignorance" grows.

The country's actual history was distorted, and current developments dressed up or ignored for the benefit of a particular "ruler" and his associates, or the multimillion stratum of the Bureaucratic-and-Administrative System. The public was suffocated by lack of information, and the grave brain damage caused by this will take a long time to cure. Only a meticulous all-round analysis will enable us to reveal the entire complex and comprehensive truth and gradually turn the country into a normally function-

ing, self-adjusting system. There is no other way out.

We are now only at the very beginning of this process.

Literature has its own, artistic ways of analyzing a social situation. We have just witnessed a miracle: fiction has overtaken the mass media in its attempt to satisfy the public thirst for information. Many novels and stories which had been locked in their authors' desks for years (or "trunk literature", as writer Chinghiz Gusseinov put it), were the first to cast light on the forced collectivization of peasants, labour camps, the 1937 purges, Stalin's genocide of his own people, the famine of the early 1930s and deportation of large ethnic groups. Journalism had to follow prose and was considered of secondary importance, though by now it has managed to achieve a great deal. The press has published innumerable documentary human interest stories, which have broadly extended our outlook on the past and present. The present struggle in our society, connected with perestroika, has revealed various social interests and aspirations and different, often opposing outlooks and attitudes.

* * *

The ideas of perestroika and glasnost in literature were put into practice not through books but in literary journals, which tend to be more enterprising and flexible than conservative Soviet book publishers. In fact, literary journals are informal writers' associations, attracting authors with similar views—prose writers, critics, poets and journalists. Every editorial board is a kind of club, or, perhaps, religious order, carefully protecting its editorial secrets.

The so-called "thick" literary monthlies are a long-standing tradition in the USSR. They publish not only essays, articles and critical reviews but also lengthy works in instalments. Literary monthlies have always been influential and prestigious in Russia. It is highly significant that such authors of genius as Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Nekrasov and Fyodor Dostoyevsky figure among the editors-in-chief of thick journals. When Dostoyevsky announced the guidelines of a new journal available on subscription, Vremya (Time), set up by himself and his brother, he focused not on its literary tasks, but on "the present moment of our social life". In his introduction he described the specific features of his time and outlined the issues which he intended to dwell upon in his journal, that is, the people's status and the general humanitarian character of the Russian idea, the way he saw it (a closer link between the intellectuals and the people). Towards the end of his life, despite working intensively on his epic novel, The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoyevsky still had time to make regular entries in his Diary of a Writer, which he began to publish in another journal, Grazhdanin (Citizen).

In the early 1960s, that is, Khrushchev's time, it was also a literary monthly, Novy Mir (New World) edited by Alexander Tvardovsky, that became the unofficial focus of the country's public thought. Until October 1964 (when Khrushchev was dismissed) it was the leader of society's democratic revival, remaining consistent in its course of de-Stalinization. After 1964, the situation in the country changed radically, and the cultural stagnation of society set in. Yet Novy Mir remained the centre of legal opposition to that process and did its best to defy the spirit of mediocrity

and tendentious triviality until its editorial board was sacked. The journal enjoyed an extremely high reputation among the progressive public. Nevertheless, I am not inclined to idealize Tvardovsky's Novy Mir, the way many people tend to do nowadays. The unofficial leader of society at the time, the journal sensed the public's urge to demonumentalize the surrounding world and undermine the epic trend in depicting reality. Yet, it was intolerant of everything that did not fit into its own programme. Its dogmatic attitudes did great damage to its own interests. I cannot help saying that the journal lacked aesthetic and ideological broad-mindedness. This can be confirmed by its refusal to publish Boris Pasternak's novel Doctor Zhivago and the editorial board's letter to the author, which was openly dogmatic in character. Novy Mir also refused to print Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita (its censored version was published by the Moskva (Moscow) magazine in 1966).

Since the radical turn towards greater democracy, which took place four years ago, Soviet literary journals have provided a solid basis for the discussion, development and implementation of new democratic ideas. They began by publishing books which their authors had started writing, without the slightest hope of publication, within the last ten to twenty years. Those works, written from anti-Stalinist, anti-totalitarian positions, analyzed "the blanks" tabooed for decades, with varying degrees of depth and artistic talent.

The leading journals as Novy Mir, Druzhba Narodov (Peoples' Friendship), Znamya (Banner) Otkryabr (October) and Neva, published a number of novels and stories exposing different aspects of the

Bureaucratic-and-Administrative System. Among them were: The Children of Arbat by Anatoli Rybakov, a novel about society's political life and Stalin as a phenomenon in the 1930s; White Robes by Vladimir Dudintsev, dealing with scientists' resistance to the System; Golden Cloud Went to Sleep by Anatoli Pristavkin, an account of the deportation of whole peoples attempted under Stalin, which also deals with man's natural humaneness; Moscow Street by Boris Yampolsky, a novel about society being overwhelmed with the fear of Stalin's regime; Sofya Petrovna by Lydia Chukovskaya, the story of an indoctrinated person who suddenly began to see the light; The Department of Useless Things by Yuri Dombrovsky, a novel about the tragedy of culture under tyranny; and finally Life and Destiny by Vassili Grossman, a book banned at a more progressive period than the Stalin era, when Khrushchev was still in control, and made public only recently.

The leading journals had to compete for the rights to the first publication of some "shelved" books. As a result, Tvardovsky's poem By the Right of Memory was published by two journals, Novy Mir and Znamya, and the famous Requiem by Anna Akhmatova appeared both in Moscow's Oktyabr and Leningrad's Neva.

All these publications, still heatedly discussed by readers to this day, have promoted the process of erasing Stalinist myths from the public consciousness and shattering the stereotyped idea of "mass enthusiasm" and the country's history in general. The growing circulation of the leading journals confirmed the public's keen interest in their materials. For example, in 1987 the circulation of Druzhba Narodov

went up by over 4 times to reach 850,000 copies, that of the Novy Mir amounted to 1,500,000 and those of Neva and Znamya doubled, exceeding half a million each.

* * *

Are you aware that there are two monuments to Gogol in Moscow? Indeed, there is only one monument to Pushkin, one to Lermontov and one to Dostoyevsky. Why two Gogols? Certainly not because the Muscovites are more fond of Gogol than, say, of Pushkin!

One Gogol (a sculpture by Andreyev) is sitting sadly in the courtyard of the house in Suvorov Boulevard where he passed away. It is indeed a monument to a genius deeply concerned with his people's destinies, a genius whose patriotism was cruelly insulted, a genius of humaneness and suffering.

The other Gogol is a typical "literary general". That mixture of Chichikov and Sobakevich is standing proudly on a high pedestal at the beginning of Gogol Boulevard, his barrel-shaped chest bulging out, and the bronze cloak over his shoulders looking too small for such an imposing character. The formal smile on his lips is obscured by exhaust fumes.

Don't believe him: he's an impostor.

The story goes that in the early 1950s, when somebody in the upper echelons remarked that the country needed new Gogols and Shchedrins, Stalin, driven past the sad Gogol, expressed his royal indignation at the lack of due optimism in the expression of the Russian classic's face. The sad Gogol was immediately removed and a new, false one took his

place on the pedestal. He is still there, radiating due optimism. It was only in 1958, after the 20th Communist Party Congress, that Andreyev's Gogol was semi-rehabilitated, that is, taken out of a cellar and shamefacedly shoved into a corner. At that time no one dared to suggest returning him to his rightful place.

The two Gogols in Moscow illustrate two sides of our culture and literature: one is full of love and compassion, even if sad and thoughtful, and the other radiates official optimism. One literature is sincere and honest, and the other is but an imitation of fiction.

Today literature has taken the risk of restoring the country's history well before historians. Its purpose is to unchain the public's prejudiced mind.

An ancient saying goes that books have their own destiny. This refers absolutely to the novels and stories written long ago and published by literary journals only recently. For example, Sofya Petrovna by Lydia Chukovskaya was written in 1939-1940, and the author had to wait for fifty years to see it in print. As for Vassili Grossman's novel, it was believed lost, for the manuscript was confiscated in 1961. Nearly a year had passed since the author had taken it to the Znamya journal when his place was searched, and the manuscript (and even the carbon paper) was confiscated. Grossman wrote a letter to Khrushchev, but his appeal was to no avail. He met with Mikhail Suslov, who said that the novel could be printed only in two hundred years' time. As for Boris Yampolsky, he wrote his novel without any hope of publication.

All the books deal with the Stalinist era.

Lydia Chukovskaya's story was the first piece of prose I know of to describe a person's behaviour at the time of the toughening purges. She wrote it just

as Anna Akhmatova (*Chukovskaya's personal acquaintance*) was composing her Requiem, a mother's lament for an arrested son—Russia's lament for her murdered children.

The action of Sofia Petrovna is set in Leningrad and is focused on a mother and her son.

The spirit of Akhmatova's Requiem is that of courageous knowledge and inner resistance, whereas Chukovskaya's heroine is by no means a wise or courageous fighter. Sofya Petrovna is an ordinary woman of conventional judgement and average common sense.

The story is written in the third person, which enables the author to show her heroine's historical blindness in a precise and disillusioned way.

"Indeed, Sofya Petrovna had every reason to avoid other women standing in the same queue. Of course, she was sorry for them as fellow human beings, and she pitied their children, yet she knew that every decent person should bear it in mind that all those women were wives and mothers of prisoners, spies and murderers." It took Sofya Petrovna a long time to see the light. Her mediocre mind found it very painful to part with such notions as "no one can be arrested for nothing", "he must be guilty, after all, if he was sentenced to 10 years of hard labour", etc. She only cast off her prejudices at the cost of her son's life. When he died, Sofya Petrovna began to neglect her appearance and seemed to be going to seed. In fact, she was gradually becoming a different person. Once alienated from her people, she eventually united with them.

Vassili Grossman's novel Life and Destiny is a real epic depicting the life of many social strata.

It presents a profound study of Stalinism in all its manifestations, and forms a kind of literary "periodic table". The writer showed amazing foresight in choosing the Battle of Stalingrad as the starting point of his epic, since it exposes all the strata of the social structure. Indeed, it was the time of the people's greatest triumph and the turning point of history, when Stalin, demoralized at the beginning of the war, began to feel he was the victor—though it is now obvious that the people and its Army won in spite of him, not because of him.

Grossman writes that the Battle of Stalingrad was not only decisive for our country, but also determined the fate of German prisoners-of-war, who would be sent to Siberia and that of Soviet prisoners-of-war in Nazi camps, who would share the Germans' Siberian exile, according to Stalin's will. That period determined the fate of famous Jewish actor Michoels and his friend, the actor Zuskin, and the future of the writers Bergelson, Markish, Kvitko and Nusinov, whose executions were to take place before the sinister trial of Jewish physicians led by Professor Vovsi. It was a turning point in the fate of such countries as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania. This period was also decisive for Russian workers and peasants, as well as for the freedom of Russian thought, literature and science.

In my opinion, it is hard, even impossible, to find any parallel of Stalinism in history, for its genocide was aimed against its own people. Naturally, such destruction had a grave effect on the nation and deteriorated its genetic stock. It was an attempt to reduce the nation to a crowd and encourage its basest, darkest passions, such as anti-Semitism and

animal hatred for the intellectuals, whom the Stalinists disgustingly labelled "a rotten stratum".

In his novel Moscow Street Boris Yampolsky described a persecuted intellectual—a writer and war veteran—who eventually became a social outcast. Yet the author was not trying to oppose "the intellectuals" and "the people": he was contrasting executioners with their victims, and heartless bureaucrats and the indifferent men in the street with those who suffered.

Yampolsky reproduced the smell, colour and atmosphere of fear that possessed people. The novel was written in defence of an individual plunged into the gloomy atmosphere of Stalinist society and corrupted by all-permissiveness. It was a vulgar, lower-class, mass variety of Stalinism: the action of the novel takes place in specially-guarded Arbat street, for the Leader used to pass it on the way to his summer cottage. "Old Arbat lived a secret life of its own: its every house, doorway and window was listed and observed, and all its inhabitants were under constant surveillance." "The enigmatic and silent chain" of security agents cast a shadow on the cheerful appearance of that shopping centre and charged it with "high-voltage electricity".

Any hopes that society would be able to breathe freely after the war were rudely dashed. The Regime was concerned not so much with writers like Akhmatova or Zoshchenko as with the people, who had to be reminded of their proper place. The men who had liberated Europe suddenly realized they were not free in their own homes, in their own "Moscow street". As Iosif Brodsky put it, "they boldly entered

other countries' capitals, but feared to return to their own" (To the Death of Zhukov).

"Insatiable sacrifice", as Yampolsky calls it, became the law of life. Fits of paranoia became as inevitable as the elements. A sequence of campaigns ("each one being more total, universal, merciless and absurd than all the previous ones put together") condensed "the atmosphere of guilt, both individual and universal, which could never be redeemed. One was to feel guilty all the time, and meekly accept all punishments, reprimands and verdicts due to him".

Universal guilt is a law worked out by the rule of terror which kept involving more and more people; not only those who gave or carried out orders or those who reported on their neighbours, but also the people who typed, issued newspapers, swept the streets, "shadowed" the suspicious or guessed the truth but kept mum.

In this respect our present dispute on whether or not everybody should be held responsible for the past seems to be an undesirable legacy of those days. Everybody was expected to be guilty then. Why shouldn't everybody feel the same today?

The people who had an undeclared war waged against them should not be made to feel guilty today. Otherwise we will never get out of the horrible trap in which we were once caught. The feeling of guilt imposed on us then bred a fear which our society cannot get rid of to this day.

In my opinion, Yuri Dombrovsky's novel The Department of Useless Things was one of the best publications of 1988. Fazil Iskander wrote in his introduction to the novel: "This book was written at

*the time of the farce by a surviving eyewitness of the tragic drama of 1937." Dombrovsky went through all the circles of Stalin's hell. His book is a novel in the classical meaning of the word—a book with a thrilling plot prompted by the author's own experience. Its hero, the archaeologist Zybin, is a graduate of the department of law of the university. He is the embodiment of culture, thought, human dignity and law. A young female interrogator who questions him in 1937 says to him ironically: "All that is a department of useless things." Hence the title of the novel. It is sad to think that Yuri Dombrovsky, the author of other remarkable books, such as *The Antiques Curator*, *The Monkey Comes for Its Own Skull*, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* and a collection of labour-camp verses, did not live to see his major work in print. "But if he kept writing his novel so persistently for years, often in the grips of appalling poverty and aware that it did not have the slightest chance of being published," wrote Fazil Iskander, "he was confident that all of us needed his book badly, and he completed it for our sake."*

The memoirs of Ossip Mandelshtam's widow, Nadezhda Mandelshtam, printed by the magazine Yunost (Youth), fall into the same category. Written over 25 years ago, they dwell on the 1930s: the search of the author's home, her husband's arrest (the first time, he was arrested in Akhmatova's presence), Akhmatova's and other friends' attempts to alleviate his fate and his difficult existence in exile. Nadezhda Mandelshtam's memoirs were printed in the same issue as a documentary account of the last period of Mikhail Zoshchenko's life by Benedikt Sarnov and Yelena Chukovskaya (Zoshchenko's Case). The

authors analyzed the literary "preparations" for the 1946 Act denouncing Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. They quote Zoshchenko's letters to Stalin, short-hand records of the meetings at the Writers' Union where the two authors were denounced, Akhmatova's and Zoshchenko's interviews with English students, Zoshchenko's letters to Konstantin Fedin and Yuri Libedinsky, and the unpublished notes by Kornei Chukovsky. The hideous story of Zoshchenko's outrageous expulsion from the Union, his persecution and existence on the verge of starvation is narrated with documentary precision. Zoshchenko's Case ends in an appeal to rehabilitate the author's name.

Today many journals are publishing more materials denouncing Stalinism than items on the current developments. This is quite natural at a time when society is regaining its memory. This is a painful process, for we have started to recall a horrible time, when millions of people were eliminated, and culture lay in ruins. So we'll have to fill in the "black holes" in order to move forward.

The poetry, prose and journalism of the last four years have revived our past experience without using dramatic appeals or rhetorical exclamations. Our society's knowledge of its own history is enriched not by warnings from above or general platitudes, but by highly realistic publications of "new prose" (so termed by Varlam Shalamov), or what we call true human interest stories, such as The Kolyma Stories by Varlam Shalamov and Non-Fiction by Lev Razgon.

Only yesterday we were pleasantly surprised by the similarity between society's de-Stalinization in the 1960s and the current process. Now we have already surpassed the 1960s, when public thought suddenly

came to a standstill after Stalin's body was removed from the Mausoleum. We are well beyond the point when everybody suddenly "discovered" the truth about the purges. Lev Razgon, who spent 17 years in forced-labour camps, writes about the fact prosaically enough: "People were killed, put behind bars and exiled as a matter of course." Stalin and his camps were condemned by the Party as a whole, but Stalinism survived in the safety of the "stagnation period". The System withstood the stormy revelations of the 1960s. "It was far easier to admit the semi-truth about the blood-thirsty tyrant in the Report to the 20th Party Congress," remarks the historian Batkin, "to release his surviving victims from the camps and permit the publication of Tyorkin in the Underworld and One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich; it was easier for Khrushchev to ban terror campaigns (no matter how important that step was from the historical point of view) than to complete the process of de-Stalinization, that is, make the entire system fully democratic by removing all the Stalinist elements and stereotypes". Without diminishing the role of the thaw in the 1960s, we have to admit that Khrushchev only skimmed the surface, which could not stop the neo-Stalinists, of course. Now we are reaching down to the roots (an excerpt from the article Revival of History). From the historical point of view, the new level implies probing into the causes and consequences of Stalinism and its roots in our past."

The falsification of history, "the systematic erasing of the collective memory" and the substitution of myths for memories, in which official propaganda and literature were engaged for years, are today being replaced by the historical truth. Yet the erasing of the

memory had a negative effect on society. According to another historian, Yuri Afanasiev, it is now going through an identity crisis, for it lacks an absolutely precise, adequate idea of itself. "Looking at ourselves in the mirror, we fail to recognize ourselves—so fragmentary is our image." It takes a great joint effort to make it integral.

In her profound article The Broken Thread (Novy Mir) Ksenia Myalo describes the crisis of traditional peasant culture in Russia in the period of "all-round collectivization", "a great turning point" that broke the peasants' backbone. The last letters of a most unorthodox poet, Nikolai Klyuev, who perished in Siberia in 1937, were published for the first time in the same issue. The correspondence between Marina Tsvetayeva's daughter, Ariadna Efron, and Boris Pasternak, printed in Znamya, reveals her staunchness and the hard life she led in exile. The same issue contains The Black Stones, an autobiographical story by the poet Anatoli Zhigulin. Zhigulin was only 18 in 1948, when he joined an underground anti-Stalinist organization, the Communist Party of Youth, which set itself the task of fighting Stalinism. The struggle was unequal: in 1948 the members of this organization were arrested and sent to the Kolyma camps where they spent many years. The overwhelming majority of them perished there. Zhigulin's story is a striking account of the actual resistance existing even in the darkest period of the totalitarian regime. Written in 1984, the story stands out among many of other publications because it is so realistic, sincere and bitterly true.

Indeed, all publications dealing with the country's past are especially popular with readers who have

been deprived of credible information for a long time. And what about their artistic merits? Vasil Bykov answered this question in the following way: "It's the truth that's artistic today." Naturally, the public's striving for the historical truth has given rise to some speculative works as well.

In the early 1980s I heard a helpless statement made by the Secretary of the Writers' Union at a literary conference: "Comrades, I must inform you that today literature is developing in a direction that is disadvantageous for us." His words made the audience laugh, but, in fact, he was expressing genuine alarm. The literary chief could not reconcile himself to the fact that fiction had its own inner laws of development, which would not abide by any official rulings.

The Soviet literary journals, whose popularity is growing daily, also publish short stories, novels and other works on the period preceding perestroika by emergent authors such as Alexander Ivanchenko, Tatiana Tolstaya, Leonid Shorokhov, Sergei Kaledin, Vyacheslav Pyetsukh, Yevgeni Stefanovich and Vitali Moskalenko. They are not making early debuts: most of them are well over thirty...

Their favourite technique may be referred to as "shock therapy". Their idea is to fill in the blank spots in the country's present, and their works are published alongside those by the older generation of writers, who deal mostly with the blank spots in the country's past.

The emergent authors write about things that used to be hushed up: social outcasts, "the insulted and the injured", poverty and unearned wealth, alcoholism, prostitution and criminal offences. Their charac-

ters are not exactly attractive—among them are grave-diggers, bums and other dregs of society. Some of them are mental cases, and the majority of them have already hit the bottom. Did we know about them in the past? We surely did, but we refrained from mentioning them, as if by a silent agreement. As if our stubborn silence could make them disappear...

They did not, of course...

The Writers' Union spent years trying to breed young literature artificially. Every year hundreds of "young talents" were invited to conferences and seminars, supported, analyzed, cherished and published by the dozen. I wonder where they are now.

The reader preferred natural talents, "wild" geniuses... Their works are highly unorthodox and often challenging, which is not always pleasant. I daresay that literature is following its own course, which is to everyone's benefit.

Journalism is playing an important part in our literary journals nowadays because it is doing its utmost to broaden society's idea of itself. The recently published novels and stories, listed in chronological order, opened the reader's eyes to the actual history of our society. As for the articles by Vassili Selyunin, Nikolai Shmelyov, Gennadi Lisichkin, Anatoli Strelyany, Yuri Chernichenko, Otto Lacis, Yuri Karyakin, Yuri Burtin and others, they provided a detailed analysis of the economic situation, studied its roots and raised previously taboo issues (such as Stalinism and its origins, ecology, law, ethnic relations, the Army and the moral problems of soldiers who fought in Afghanistan, as well as drug addiction, prostitution, etc.). The issues raised by our documentary writers infringe upon the interests of various

administrative bodies and the Bureaucratic System in general, which reacts very badly to the journalists' attacks. No wonder that many speakers at the 19th Party Conference (1988) assumed an extremely aggressive tone when referring to the press. In fact, many administrators are still trying to "take the press in hand" and limit glasnost (openness). They resort to the classic "command-and-administration" technique to impose their own opinions on the journals. It is still semi-prohibited to mention many "unpleasant" facts, and particularly to analyze them, but a great effort is being made to "open" the banned subjects. We have already heard some top officials speak about the journals' attempts to "blacken" our past and present, claiming that continuous denunciations might destroy the younger generation's ideals. Yet, the truth cannot be destructive: it is either the truth or a lie. Such statements actually express the conservatives' fear of the future. No wonder: as far as literature is concerned, they are apprehensive of being ousted from the literary journals and fear that the number and size of their editions might be cut. Well, they have every reason to be apprehensive.

The restoration of what I call cultural continuity plays an invaluable part in the revival of our literary tradition and its liberation from mediocrity, which reigned in the Brezhnev period. What I mean, is the publication of books previously inaccessible to our reader—those by Andrei Platonov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Yevgeni Zamyatin, Boris Pilnyak, Nikolai Klyuev, Ossip Mandelshtam and Maximilian Voloshin, as well as numerous documents and reminiscences casting a light on their dramatic lives. Such publications are radically changing the image of our literature, for

the once forgotten authors' brilliant works were forcefully removed from fiction. Thanks to their authors' amazing foresight, many of the books are still alarmingly up-to-date. They are a social and historical warning triggering our modern public thought.

I must also emphasize the fact that it is the literary journals that are rehabilitating many emigrant writers who had to leave their country at different periods. Among the recent publications of this kind are poems and prose works by Georgi Ivanov, Vladimir Nabokov, Vladislav Khodasevich (the first wave of emigration), Ivan Yelagin (the second wave), Iosif Brodsky and Naum Korzhavin (the third wave). Literary reviewers (an account of modern criticism would require a special article, for the debates are very heated indeed) now refer to Alexander Solzhenitsin without derogatory epithets.

The Yunost monthly has published City Strolls, a story by Viktor Nekrasov, who emigrated in 1973 and died in Paris in 1987. Druzhba Narodov printed three of his essays: on Anna Akhmatova's funeral, on Tvardovsky and on Voloshin's Crimean home. The Ogonyok weekly has printed Viktor Konetsky's reminiscences on his meetings with Nekrasov in Paris (The Last Meeting), and Literaturnaya Gazeta (Literary Gazette)—Privalov's article I'm Addressing You from Paris. The Oktyabr journal has published Memoirs by Konstantin Vanshenkin.

Subscribers to Druzhba Narodov, Yunost and Ogonyok had a chance to get acquainted with poems by the Nobel Prize winner, Iosif Brodsky, tried and condemned for "parasitism" in Leningrad and soon forced to emigrate, as well as with his interviews and

articles about him. Oktyabr has published poetry by Naum Korzhavin, now residing in Boston (USA). True literature has at last found its way home. Yet, I do hope that the stories about emigrant writers are not another political campaign. I agree with Anna Berzer, the sponsor of Viktor Nekrasov's publications in the USSR, who wrote in her afterword: "The story of his tragic life has yet to be written. It will have to be a meticulous, detailed and dignified account, free of hasty phrases, semi-truths or loud praise."

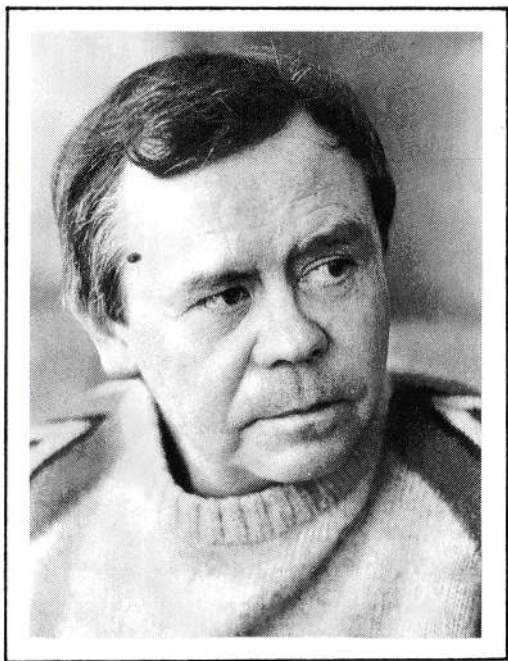
As you can see, the social atmosphere in literature and the hierarchy of popularity have radically changed, but it is too early to feel euphorical.

What we are observing today, is an uncompromising social struggle, and attempts are being made to impede our progress not only in the economy but in literature as well. The same is true about literary journals, where one can observe a polarization of opinions. Literary debates clarify people's social and political views, which are by no means uniform. The society which was claimed to be spiritually unanimous for years has suddenly revealed its heterogeneous, often opposing interests, and it would be a grave mistake to describe it as unanimously liberal.

Still, public consciousness is undergoing a real revolution, without which it would be impossible to build a new society.

Valentin RASPUTIN,

*A WRITER OF TENDER
CONSCIENCE*



Every nation has names which do not have to be preceded by definitions like "physicist", "Congressman", "poet", "engineer" or "actor". This is true of Valentin

Rasputin: the majority of Soviet people know he is a writer.

Aware that writing is not his sole occupation and that he is concerned with numerous other personal, social, civic and

humanitarian problems, which often have nothing to do with fiction, still readers are always looking forward primarily to his new books. I suppose this is because his books are a source of eternal values which turn a person into his reader, friend and close associate in his complicated work—the study of human life.

This Russian prose-writer has made an amazing literary career. Born into a peasant family in the small Siberian township of Ust-Uda on the Angara, he decided to become a teacher and joined the Department of History and Philology at Irkutsk University, earning his living by writing articles for a youth paper. It was in 1961 that his first short story was published in the Siberian *Angara* almanac. The story attracted the attention of writer Vladimir Chivilikhin, who became the young author's literary "godfather". In 1967, Rasputin's first collection of short stories, *A Man from the Underworld*, was published. Ten years later Rasputin was a national celebrity and the author of such books as *Money for Maria*, *Borrowed Time*, *Live On and Remember* and *Farewell to Matyora*. Indeed, it was an amazing career for a "provincial" author. Apart from being

recognized a celebrity, he was often referred to as "a Siberian Chekhov" and compared to Sholokhov, Faulkner and Tolstoy, which literary critics are usually more than reluctant to do.

Why did Rasputin become the centre of public attention? As most of his characters are country folk, the first reviewers tended to consider him a representative of "country prose". Yet, others were dead against such a narrow definition.

"Rasputin's works contribute to the discussion of the eternal issues of life and death, conducted by world fiction from time immemorial," wrote the Yugoslav literary critic, Liljana Šop.

"The issues he raises have no geographical, national or class boundaries," remarked the Canadian scholar, Norman Schneidman.

Valentin Rasputin declared himself a psychological writer, capable of fascinating the reader with man's inner world, even though his heroes are ordinary people, almost undistinguishable from the rest of the enormous country's population.

On the surface, his book *Live On and Remember* is the story of a deserter. But within it

the author shows an amazing insight into human nature.

Farewell to Matyora depicts the tragedy of people whose native village is about to perish under the waves of a man-made reservoir. "What are we on this earth: masters or temporary dwellers who come to stay for a while, then go, totally unconcerned about the past and having no future?"

Borrowed Time is the story of Anna, an 80-year-old woman who has lived all her life in the country, working as a peasant and "having only one interest: her kids, who had to be fed, clothed and washed every day and for whom she had to stock food, to be able to feed them tomorrow." Anna is dying, and the author depicts the last day of her life tactfully and affectionately.

Another story, *Money for Maria*, brings the reader face to face with such basic moral issues as good and evil, conscience and compassion, sympathy and mutual help.

The Fire published in 1985 is an almost documentary story meant as a warning and an appeal. Showing different people's behaviour during a fire, the author

unobtrusively helps the reader to comprehend the identity of two notions, "home" and "Homeland".

Rasputin came into the limelight at a hard time for any writer. Man's natural sense of freedom, both external and inner, was suppressed by the time-serving demands of the period which we now call "the era of fanfare silence". Yet, Rasputin succeeded in striking a theme of his own and finding a way of expressing his own thoughts in his own words, simply and soulfully. Reading between the lines, thousands of people instantly perceived the heart of a man for whom honesty and sincerity were the foundations of life.

A list of the author's books and the critical reviews and essays on his writings is available at any library. Here are a few facts that are not so well known.

Composer Kirill Volkov's Organ Sonata in Two Movements was inspired by Valentin Rasputin's *The Fire* and premiered in Irkutsk, the writer's home town, on March 14, 1988.

"This year's list of the most ardent protectors of the environment, annually compiled by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP),

consists of 94 names of scientists and other public figures from 59 countries, including Valentin Rasputin..." (TASS, June 6, 1988).

What kind of man is he to captivate readers, inspire composers and be a top international expert on environmental protection?

He is a writer. A Russian, Soviet writer born in Siberia. It was probably that severe land with its dramatic history that bred such a talent.

"What is specific about Siberian literature?... Well, there is nothing exactly specific about it. Broadly speaking, it is not regional fiction. It deals with the same problems and fights for the same kind of man as literature in any other part—the West Ukraine, the south or north—anywhere. Naturally, we do have purely Siberian problems. We want Siberia to remain Siberia with some of its typical differences and features, and we want to preserve its specific environment. We want other people to share our feelings.

"We writers of Siberia and Russia's North are sometimes reproached for writing in 'dialect'. I suppose this is because many people have started to forget their mother tongue, Russian. Figures of speech are gradually vanishing from our

vocabulary, as well as whole notions and the words used to express them. It seems to me that figures of speech should be preserved, and there is no harm in turning to dialect in search of an apt word, even if it annoys the reader. Why can't he look it up in a dictionary (there are plenty of them at his disposal)? I must say that the language is better preserved in Siberia and Northern Russia than anywhere else. We write the way we do not because we stubbornly insist on using dialect, but because it is the way we are. Like my friend, the writer Vassili Belov, I was born and bred in the country, and I don't know any other language. I express myself in the tongue I learned in my childhood—the tongue my old women speak, when I write about old women. If I write about the Moscow public, they speak a different language..."

The need to change reality according to the loftiest moral and social principles is one of the eternal tasks facing the Russian writer. Today this theoretical task has a chance to be put into practice. Rasputin has this to say on the subject: "An incompetent person cannot be spiritual. Or should I put it in a different way: a person

Valentin RASPUTIN

should be spiritual, only then can he be competent. Perhaps, it is my bad luck, but I have met few party functionaries and other officials who were spiritual enough. Most of them were champions of the principle: 'Do it now!' They do what they are told to do. Sometimes they can tell good from evil, but they dare not disobey. I have the feeling that there is a control post on the way to power, like the metal detectors used by air lines. If you have any metal on you, the device rings an alarm bell. It is the same in the moral sphere: if you are spiritual, the System will bar your way to power. Recently we have observed some reasonably spiritual people getting access to management, but there are so few of them! What is clear is that nothing will come of our efforts unless spirituality and high moral principles become Man's number

one priority! It is extremely important that these concepts have the same implication for everybody. The thing is that I have often come across party functionaries who interpret morality as obedience, and spirituality as political education, no more..."

Such is Valentin Rasputin, a writer of tender conscience, for whom such concepts as the "truth" and "justice" are inalienable from life.

Once somebody asked him what he would have become if he had not been a literary man.

"A forester, I think," was the reply.

"Who is your favourite writer?"

"Dostoyevsky."

"Do you think you are a great writer?"

"No, I don't," Rasputin said, smiling. "I think I'm an honest writer, which is a lot, for it's hard to be honest."

Nikolai NEICH

Valentin RASPUTIN

SIBERIA, SIBERIA...

(An excerpt)





Whenever thinking of Baikal and seeking comparisons, one is bound to recall Lake Teletskoye—not as Baikal's equal, of course (there is nothing like it in the world), but as its younger brother, as the work of the same hands, as one of the same family.

Its Altai name is Altyn-kol, that is, Golden Lake. Its Russian name, Lake Teletskoye, originates from the tribe of Teles, a nomadic people who populated its shores and was twice conquered by a Boyar's son, Pyotr Sabansky, in the 17th century. Now the Altai tribes are mixed together and have become indistinguishable, but in the past each of them cherished its own rites and distinctive features, and the Teles people were numerous and powerful.

Why Golden Lake? The legend goes that in a year of famine a shepherd found a gold nugget and tried to swap it for food. However, he had no luck because the people around were as poor as himself, and they looked upon gold as an inedible piece of rock. In despair the shepherd threw the nugget into the lake, and ever since, it has been known as Golden Lake.

This legend is so straightforward that it can be taken for an account of actual events. A professional hunter from Iogach told me a story, which I believed, about something that happened only two years ago. On his way back from a winter hunt, he lost his way, became exhausted and fell into a canyon with his skis on. Fortunately, the skis were not damaged, but under the circumstances he could not even think of climbing up the slope: it was as steep as a wall. The hunter had to move downhill, and after a while he came out to a decrepit, black winter hut. Next to it a spring splurled, forming a crust of ice over the stones. The hunter looked around and touched the door: it sprang open, like in a fairy tale. It was dark inside, and a hideous smell struck him almost physically. He stood staring into the darkness for a long time, until he could distinguish a stove, a bench, a table and a bunk bed. Something was lying on the bunk. He took another step forward and recoiled: the remains of a man lay in front of him, partially covered with rags and partially open to view. It was only some time later, having recovered his breath in the fresh air and gone back to the hut, that he noticed something that turned him to stone. On the bench, near the head of the bed, stood a jar full of gold. One can only guess that when the lone gold-pro prospector grew so sick that he realized his end was

near, he decided to display his fatal gains. I believed the hunter when he said he had run away, scared out of his wits, without touching anything, because I would have done exactly the same. Back at his own hunting lodge, as they now call a winter hut, he told his friend what had happened, and they racked their brains together for a few days, trying to decide what to do. Eventually, they decided to leave the digger and his gold alone, for it would be too much trouble to deal with all the ensuing problems. The best thing was to forget about it, as if nothing had happened. It was the end of the story that convinced me the most. "You know," he said sounding as surprised as he had been two years ago, "after that we were very lucky with sables. We had spent two weeks looking for them in the woods, but hadn't as much as caught a glimpse of one. After that they simply fell into our hands. It was a really good hunt."

To those who read this story with an incredulous smile, thinking: "And what if the man made it up? Could such a thing actually have happened?" I can answer: "Yes, it could." The shores of Lake Teletskoye are rich in gold, and there used to be many diggers in the area.

Yet, it seems to me that the author Vladimir Chivilikhin was right when he put the name of the lake down to its beauty rather than the gold. I also feel that the lake owes its name to its pure and plentiful water (and water is the world's most precious asset nowadays), running down the mountain slopes in rivers, creeks, streams and waterfalls.

If you cross the lake in a boat from one end to the other, not like a tourist—a rooster flapping its wings to attract his hens' attention—but looking attentively at the water and the shores, it might occur to you that Lake Teletskoye has been spared by the industrial boom of the last few decades. Indeed, there are no pulp factories or chemically treated fields around, nor any railways leading to the lake, and nearly the entire right bank has long been occupied by a wildlife preserve. One might think that, unlike Lake Baikal, Teletskoye can protect itself. There is no access to it, apart from one place, a wide valley in the upper reaches of the Biya—nothing that can attract industry, which needs flat terrains and plenty of space. The lake is unguarded only in one place, but apparently it is going to pay a dear price for Nature's blunder. The thing is that about twenty years ago the Gorno-Altayski experimental plant for all-round utilization of the cedar taiga landed in the upper reaches of the Biya, like an alien spaceship. What a

name! It has such a grand ring to it! In fact, it is an ordinary timber enterprise, disguised beneath a fancy name, that has been exterminating the Teletskoye taiga for years. Those who learned about the famous Cedar City from Vladimir Chivilikhin's feature stories, may bow their heads to another grave of good intentions.

In comparison to Baikal, Teletskoye is like a younger brother. It is almost identical to Baikal, but on a smaller scale. Its waters are not so vast or pure, and its fauna is much poorer. It has fewer colours and shades, rivers and creeks, winds and currents, and it is not as deep or wide. As for islands, they are practically non-existent—there are only rocks and shoals. There are no seals in it. If Baikal is an oratorio, Teletskoye is a ballad. It was conceived and made in two parts: power is proclaimed in the first one and mercy manifested in the second. It stretches from the south to the north like a deep and severe corridor for 50 kilometres. At that point it peacefully turns westward, like a leg bent at the knee. The southern corridor is cut in rock, with narrow openings of rivers and occasional terraces on the eastern slope, and the northern part beyond the "knee", which looks like a wide river, gradually passes into the actual river, Biya. The shore line of both parts is stunningly beautiful.

But Baikal and Teletskoye are of the same character. Both are situated at the same altitude, and each has one major inflowing river (the Selenga in Baikal and the Chulyshman in Teletskoye), with numerous tributaries, and one out-going river (the Angara and the Biya respectively). It looks as if the Biya was meant to begin at the "knee", where there is a big submerged rock—exactly the same as in the Angara. Yet, the Lord changed His mind and added some water. As a result, the rock did not rise above the surface and never became a local version of the Shaman Stone.

Teletskoye is abundant in rocks—it is framed with them. And it has preserved its ancient, pre-Russian names much better than Baikal. As you travel downstream, following the map, asking the locals and recalling the past, you begin to hear the primeval music of those names engendered jointly by the sun, wind, water and rock: Yai-liu, Kor-bu, Be-le, Ky-ga, Kam-ga... And if you slow down to make way for a tourist cruiser from which the amplified voice of some pop star is roaring, and wait till the thundering echo of a stone avalanche caused by her voice dies away, trying to get over your recent fright, you will gradually become aware of pure sounds

making up a pure tune. Your eyes will behold festive scenes, and you will be lost in time, amidst numerous peoples...

There are now fewer and fewer places where you can forget about Earth's problems in communion with Nature, and the same is true about the number of landscapes unspoilt at the time of our birth. The longer we live the more we suffer from the wounds and defeats of a bloodless war, undeclared, unrecognized and lasting till the end of our days. Letting the cruiser pass and putting it out of your mind, you plunge yourself into what remains of the sacred font and abode, but you somehow don't feel happy, relaxed or lucky. Your soul, rendered mute by suffering and fear, rejected, cringing and humble, creeps out of your body and gingerly perches itself on the very edge of your ego, as if it were a precipice, and sits there, perfectly quiet, looking and listening. No, it does not simply look or listen: it bathes itself in the world around, washing away the suffering and oblivion. If you scare it with a sudden word or a crude memory, it will absentmindedly sing something half happy and half sad, something flowing and fluttering that casts a light on your lost memories. If you fall under its spell and listen to the tune until you are on the verge of collapse, please don't take it as a bad omen. Were our lands alive, our souls would be alive too.

As if through a misty veil of unconsciousness, you will behold a primeval sight: a mighty stream of water, foamy and swirling like boiling water, is falling from a breathtaking height, breaking and cooling on the rocks, and flowing farther down. You will also see yourself sitting on a boulder under the waterfall, soaked through by the spray and never taking your eyes off the river flowing slowly and serenely towards you in two streams, between the mossy slopes. All of a sudden there is a loud rumble, and two crazy streams of water, divided by the rock, crash against the terrace and rush down like two manes. The water that has splashed against the upper edge and the terrace and bounced off the stones and grass, forms little creeks and droplets, and each of them, singing its own song, streams down, breaks on the rocks below, splutters, pulls itself together, merges with other currents and flows down to the main stream.

You will be amazed by your own childish desire to be happy, and wonder if all that will go on for ever, and whether a hundred, or even a thousand years ago the same mass of water fell from the same height, and the waterfall uttered its own name, Kor-bu! Kor-bu!, just as distinctly and thunder-

ously, with supporting voices—the way a hammer strikes an anvil, anxious to tell the world about what it is doing.

No matter where you go—down south, the way we are travelling now, or up north (or rather down north, considering the direction of the current: the wildlife preserve with the Korbu Waterfall being on the right bank), you will see the foaming, tousled manes, the neat, narrow bands and short curtains of waterfalls. There are more of them in spring and fewer in autumn. They can be found streaming down the middle of a wooded slope, falling from the high rocks that hang over the lake, curving coquettishly and smooth as marble, drilling canyons in the rock and zigzagging—only to fall into the lake like an ordinary river.

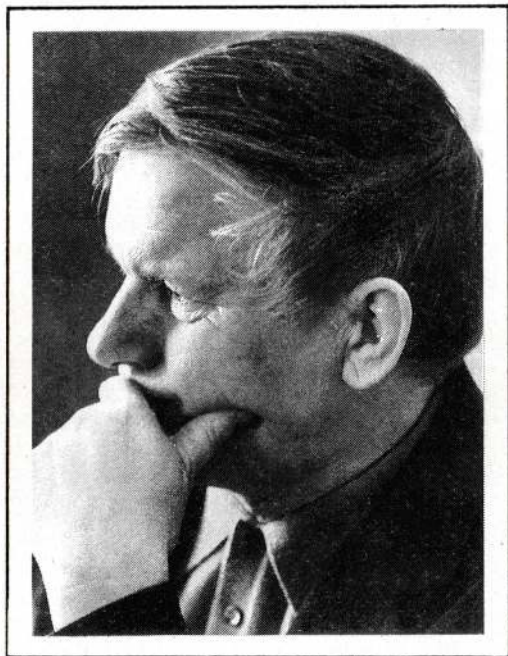
Then there are the rocks... the lake is nearly crushed by them. The shore occupied by the preserve has some flat areas, enough to build a house, lay out a vegetable garden and tread a path—all in a good cause, of course. As for the Bele Canyon, it is a pure gift: there is a whole “counter” of flat land there, about three kilometres long. The left bank is a chaos of huge, gloomy rocks cut with canyons and gorges and smashed by avalanches. The water, which has only just been preparing to flow, has to fall. The cliffs rise steeply over the lake or start from a terrace made of fallen stones. The rock is overgrown with lichens and there is plenty of badan (*Bergenia gratifolia*) around. One cannot help marvelling at the trees—larches, cedars, birches—and red and blackcurrant bushes, etc., growing on bare rock together with wild onions and rhubarb. Wherever you look, you always encounter a stone wall without a single gap in it. But closer to the water surface, near the shore, there are little bays, grottoes, strange stone figures carved by the water, little gates, stone canopies and sand trying hard to make a beach...

When the sun comes out, both shores look equally cheerful and welcoming. Everything relaxes and bursts into blossom, talks and sings, forming an integral, magical picture.



Vasil BYKOV:

A LESSON IN DIGNITY



Vasil BYKOV

It is impossible to imagine modern Soviet literature without Vasil Bykov. His books will be in demand for many years to come, for the writer has a profound insight into human nature and the roots of our national tragedy; he knows about

unbending staunchness and eternal beauty. Bykov's works will always keep up with the times because they are ideologically and psychologically profound, as well as being based on solid historical facts.

There are many books,

essays, theses and literary studies on Vasil Bykov. Scholars have analyzed every nuance of his literary work. Yet, Vasil Bykov's writing and character are so unpretentious that one has to write about him as simply as possible.

This is what he says about himself: "I was born in a village in Vitebsk Region, Byelorussia. Before the war I got enrolled at the Vitebsk Art School, to be trained as a sculptor, but I never became one because of the war. Instead I graduated from an infantry school and became a platoon commander in an infantry regiment. Only four out of our 80 graduates survived the war.

"I was wounded several times, treated in hospitals and transferred from one detachment to another. On one occasion I was even appointed commander of a 45-mm gun platoon (which was far more desperate than being in the trenches). We were known as tank destroyers. Actually, our gun was not sufficiently powerful, so we mostly destroyed tanks with grenades... Once I ended up on the casualty list. It happened after a tank attack. One January night in 1944 the Nazis decided to take us by surprise. Our defence line crossed a

corn field near the village of Bolshaya Severinovka, and I was wounded in the leg. One tank was moving fast in my direction. I made an unsuccessful attempt to blow it up with a grenade, and the tank nearly ran over me. It was Lieutenant Mirgorod who blew it up with his grenade. I was picked up and taken to the village, where I was placed in a house with other wounded men. At night our battalion commander came to see us. Apparently, the battalion had suffered a great loss of life, and he was looking for someone who could walk. He came up to my bed too. "Where is your wound?" he asked me. "In the leg," I said. Soon the village was attacked by the Nazi tanks. I crawled out of the house. One of the tanks halted in front of it and opened fire. The house was set ablaze and collapsed. Our battalion commander saw this and gave up all the wounded as dead. I was picked up unconscious and taken to hospital. I never returned to that detachment, and was believed dead. In fact, I went on fighting..."

On June 19, 1945, Vasil Bykov turned 21. He served in the army for another ten years, moving from Ukraine to Byelorussia and the Far East.

It was in the Far East that he wrote his first short stories in 1951 (though he had written prose before, and some of it had even been printed in newspapers). After that he wrote and published many other stories and eventually decided to become a professional journalist. In 1955 he retired from the army, moved to Grodno and became a reporter with the local daily. Though he wrote a great deal at that time, he was not yet the Bykov we know now. He still had a reporter's approach to life, though in the positive meaning of this word.

The Vasil Bykov we know appeared in 1959, with the publication of his story *Cry of the Cranes*. "During the war and for a long time after it was over I could neither read nor write about it," said Bykov. "When the so-called second wave of wartime prose was on the upsurge, and when the former lieutenants and privates started writing about the war, it was a revelation for the public—their accounts were so unorthodox, painful and truthful... Their books showed the naked truth about the war, and their prose was nearly documentary. It was that kind of prose that urged me to start writing wartime stories."

The second wave of wartime prose made him realize that an attempt was being made to show Man at war from an entirely new angle. "If I wrote stories about everyday life, my characters would be more blurred," said Bykov. "In peacetime man is a mixture of good and evil, because good and evil are complex categories. In wartime any indefiniteness would be unnatural. In war everything becomes clear in no time—one doesn't have to wait for the hero to become a boss, divorce his wife or take to booze. In wartime everything comes to light by the end of the day, if one manages to survive, of course. But each day lived through radically changes the situation and the human essence."

Now it is time to speak about the chief aspect of Vasil Bykov's writing.

He is an original author with profound philosophical insight. The sophistication and scale of his writing took some time to be realized. I have to mention this fact because it was a hard period in the writer's life. At the time when his style was just taking shape, some critics attempted to force him back to the well-trodden path. He did not yield!

Bykov's stories contain

no descriptions of big battles. Their characters' life stories are scanty, and the narrative embraces only a few days, introduced by one or a few episodes from the life of some of the characters, but not many.

The writer's attention is focused on an ordinary enough participant of the war, who is not particularly handsome, eloquent or very different from the people around. There are millions of people like him, but Bykov brings him to the brink of life and makes him choose between life and death. Unprompted and unaided, this man is to make a choice between something far more important than life and death: he is to decide whether he is to be, or not to be a Man! No matter how insignificant his professional or social status, this person (a driver, soldier, prisoner-of-war or junior officer) might prove to be a Man in the loftiest sense of the word, or lose the right to be called one. It is bound to happen because when one ceases to be a man (even in the ordinary sense of the word) this means the beginning of a scoundrel, traitor and scum, who has nothing to do with man, for he is no longer human.

Vasil Bykov gives each of his heroes a chance to

identify himself with either, doing it objectively and without any pressure. To be precise, Vasil Bykov shows something that his character has had all his life, something that was hidden deep down before the time of trial, which the man himself was not even aware of—either powerful or a repulsive personality. The two opposing characters usually act quite independently, and Vasil Bykov makes them clash, so that one's behaviour is dependent on the other's; this makes the situation extremely dramatic and the psychological conflict between them very complicated.

In the preface to one of his books Vasil Bykov wrote that his idea was to revive "... the memory of our modest men who were to make their hardly noticeable but sacrificial contribution to the struggle against Nazi Germany in the unforgettable war years. This is by no means a dramatic description of our gallant soldiers' valour—it is a narrative of several wartime episodes, little drops in the boundless ocean of struggle, which at that time was filled to the brim with human blood and human tears." Taking up Bykov's image of a drop, I can add that like a drop of ocean water, which

tastes the same as the rest of the ocean, each "drop" depicted by the author reflects the entire war with its inhumane laws. Besides, the country's great victory was made up of little victories won by all those "ordinary people". It is extremely hard to show this great

victory, the terrible human tragedies and intense clashes between good and evil, human greatness and meanness in a single drop, and Vasil Bykov seems to be the only present-day Soviet author who can do it.

Vladimir KARPOV

Vasil BYKOV

Vasil BYKOV

SOTNIKOV

(An excerpt)



Meanwhile the door was indeed opening. A wave of icy cold fresh air swept into the cell and the grey light from outside suddenly lit up five pale anxious faces. The nimble Stas appeared in the doorway and behind him loomed another figure carrying a rifle.

"Wakey, wakey!" Stas bellowed at the top of his voice. "Up you get, lazybones, it's liquidation time!"

"So we were right, it really is the end," Rybak thought. "Not just some one of us, but all..." He went all limp for a moment, all his strength suddenly ebbing from him, and he pulled in his legs numbly, put his hat straight and only then propped his hands against the straw, about to rise to his feet.

"Come on, out you get! Willy-nilly of your own free will!" Stas urged stridently.

Pyotr in the corner was first on his feet, then Dyomchikha uttered a deep sigh and began to get up. Sotnikov flapped weakly at the wall in an effort to rise. Rybak cast an unseeing glance at his pale face that had grown even more haggard during the night, his sunken eyes with dark bags under them, and stumbled to the door in a daze.

"Come on, look lively, you haven't got all day! As a matter of fact you've got precisely twenty minutes!" the policeman chivied them, entering their stinking den. "Hey, you! One-leg! Get a move on!"

"Hands off! I'll manage myself!" Sotnikov croaked.

"Hey, Yid girl, what are you waiting for? Out you get! You didn't want to talk, well, now you're going to swing! That'll loosen your tongue!" Stas said cheerfully and suddenly screamed fiercely: "Get going, you bitch!"

They climbed up the snow-covered concrete steps into the yard. Rybak walked limply, leaving his coat undone, and not even noticing the sharp invigorating frost. After a night in that stinking cellar, his head spun as though he were drunk. Half a dozen policemen stood waiting across the yard from them, their rifles at the ready. The morning was misty with a sharp nip in the air, and grey plumes of smoke streamed from the chimneys.

Rybak hovered in front of the entrance steps, and Dyomchikha and Basya stopped beside him. Basya now tagged on to this woman as though she were her mother. She stood pressing one crusty foot against the other, looking round fearfully at the policemen. Pyotr stood some way off, his whole hoary figure a picture of sullen aloofness. Meanwhile

Stas dragged Sotnikov up the steps cursing vilely and dropped him wearily in the snow. Sotnikov picked himself up without giving himself a moment to recover, and straightened in his crumpled, bloodstained greatcoat.

"Where's the investigator? Call the investigator!" he tried to shout in a hoarse, choking voice, and began coughing at once.

Rybak suddenly remembered that he must see the investigator too, and in contrast to Sotnikov said calmly:

"Yes, take us to the investigator. Yesterday he said..."

"Don't you worry, we know where to take you," a burly, heavy-jowled policeman jeered, striding towards them with a rope in his hands. "Give us your hands!"

There was nothing for it, and Rybak put his hands out. The policeman thrust first one then the other behind his back and began to tie them helped by another policeman. It was a rough, painful and humiliating procedure. Rybak winced, not so much from the pain to his wrists as from the despair that gripped him. This really was the end then.

"Inform the investigator. We must see the investigator," he said, not very firmly however, with the distinct feeling that the ground was giving way beneath his feet.

But the policeman simply cursed angrily from behind him.

"Too late, chum! You've had all the investigating you're going to get."

"What do you mean!" Rybak cried and looked over his shoulder. But seeing the brutal face with its rough growth of white stubble, and reading the total indifference to him in the narrow, shifty pig-like eyes, he realized that this was not a man to be browbeaten. Then he seized his last remaining chance and began to plead: "Please, send for Portnov. Be human, it won't cost you anything."

But no doubt the way to Portnov was longer than to his death, so nobody even bothered to answer.

Meanwhile his hands had been skilfully bound tight with the thin rope, which cut painfully into his skin, and he was thrust aside. They now turned to Dyomchikha.

"Hey you, fetch the investigator!" Sotnikov demanded of Stas, who, with his rifle over his shoulder, was busying himself with Dyomchikha. But Stas did not even look round. Like all the others, he was deaf to their requests, as though they no longer counted as human beings. Rybak became convinced that they were doomed. They were going to die. But he still could not fully reconcile himself to the fact and

cursed himself for not having tried to do something about it while his hands were still free.

His insides churned in the awareness that he had committed a fatal blunder, and he cast his eyes around frantically. But there was definitely no possibility of escape. Indeed, everything seemed to show that the end was rapidly approaching. Senior officials were coming out onto the porch one after the other, some of them in stiff brand-new police uniforms—short black overcoats with grey collars and cuffs, with pistols at the hip. Two of them, probably Germans, wore long gendarme's greatcoats and high peaked caps. There were several men in civilian clothes wearing scarves, keeping distinctly aloof from the others, as though guests at somebody else's function. The policemen in the yard respectfully stopped talking and formed up. Somebody counted hastily behind their backs:

"One, two, three, four, five..."

"Well, everything ready?" a burly policeman with a small holster at the waist called from the steps.

It was this holster and the powerful figure that stood out from the rest that told Rybak that this was the chief. No sooner had this thought struck him than Sotnikov called out hoarsely from behind. "Chief, I want to make a statement."

The chief stopped on the steps and glowered at the prisoner.

"Well, what is it?"

"I'm a partisan. It was me who wounded your man," Sotnikov said in a subdued voice and nodded towards Rybak. "This man just happened to be there. If you like, I can explain. The others are all perfectly innocent. Take me and let them go."

The officers on the steps were silent now. The two at the head of the party looked at one another in perplexity, and Rybak felt a tiny spark of relief, lighting a faint glimmer of hope: perhaps they will believe him? This encouraging feeling at once produced a surge of gratitude towards Sotnikov.

However, the momentary attention on the chief's face gave way to angry impatience:

"Is that all?" he asked icily, and marched down the steps. Sotnikov gulped in surprise.

"I can explain in more detail if you like."

Somebody growled angrily, someone said something in German, and the chief waved his hand.

"Lead them off!"

"So he doesn't even want to listen," Rybak thought, plunging into the depths of despair again. No doubt everything had already been fixed. But what about him then? Surely Sotnikov's valiant intercession on his behalf was not going to be in vain?

The officers came down into the yard, treading carefully on the bending wooden steps. Suddenly Rybak recognized one of them, also in police uniform, as Portnov. There was no doubt about it, it was the investigator alright, the man who had so encouraged him with his proposal the day before and now seemed to have forgotten all about it. Rybak's heart began to pound and he strained forward. Come what may, nothing seemed terrible or even awkward any more.

"Inspector, Sir! One moment, please! You said... Well, I agree! I'm innocent, I swear it! You heard what he just said!"

The officers who were already making their way out of the yard into the street began to stop one by one, visibly annoyed. Portnov stopped too. His new uniform was clearly too big for him and hung loosely on his puny body, and his black cap was askew on his head like a crooked coxcomb. But he suddenly assumed an air of authority and ostentatious severity. A tall German in a tightly-belted greatcoat looked at him inquiringly and the investigator explained something in glib German.

"Come here!"

All eyes fixed on him from both sides, Rybak went over, every step he took resounding with a painful thump inside him. The thread of his still frail hope was ready to snap forever at any instant.

"You mean you agree to join the police?" the investigator asked.

"Yes," Rybak said with all the sincerity he could muster.

He kept his almost adoring gaze firmly fixed on Portnov's worn, aging but smooth-shaved face. The investigator and the German exchanged a few more phrases in German.

"Untie the prisoner!"

"Bastard!" a low angry cry struck him like a blow on the back of the neck, its origin immediately betrayed by the familiar painful coughing.

So what! Something terrible that had been inexorably advancing on him suddenly began to recede rapidly, and Rybak gave a deep sigh and felt someone tugging at the rope behind his back. But he did not even look round. One powerful feeling drowned out everything else: he was going to

live! His freed hands dropped limply to his sides, and he automatically took a step to one side, his whole being straining away from the others—he now wanted to get as far away from them as possible. He moved another three steps away and nobody stopped him. Some of the officers had already turned and were making towards the gate, when Dyomchikha began screaming from behind:

“You’re letting him go! Let me go too! Let me go, I’ve got children, what’ll become of them without me!”

Her anguished cry brought everybody to a halt again, and Portnov happened to be nearest to her. The tall German gabbled something angrily and the investigator made a sweeping movement with his hand and said: “Lead them off.” Then he turned to Rybak and said: “You can help him,” pointing towards Sotnikov. Rybak was not very pleased at this, for now he would like to keep as far away from Sotnikov as possible. But orders were orders and he jumped to it at the double and ran over to his comrade and took him by the arm.

They led them out through the wide-open gates into the street. Police with rifles at the ready walked on either side. The officers and officials held back to let them pass. Pyotr was in the lead, walking stiff and erect, with his white head bare and his hands twisted behind his back. Next came Dyomchikha, stumbling along choking with sobs. Beside her, draped in a dark coat with long baggy sleeves, Basya tripped along on bare feet.

Rybak supported Sotnikov under the arm. The latter had wilted visibly, was stooping more than ever, and dragged along slowly behind the others, coughing and limping badly on his wounded leg. His purple foot ploughed stiffly, as though lifeless, through the snow, the toes leaving a weird trail. He said nothing, and Rybak did not have the courage to speak to him. Although they were walking along together, they were already on different sides of the fence that divided people into friend and foe. Despite a vague nagging sense of guilt, Rybak tried to convince himself that he was not really guilty of anything much. A person was guilty if he did something with malicious intent or for personal gain. And what had he gained? He had simply had better chances and had been cunning enough to survive. But he was no traitor.

...One by one they were taken to their places at the gallows. Pyotr, silent now in meek concentration, was led to the noose nearest to the officials. Sotnikov looked at him and frowned guiltily. Only the day before he had regretted that

they had not shot the old man and now he was to swing from the same gallows...

Rybak, left to manage Sotnikov alone, led him rather hesitantly to the last block beneath the gallows and stopped. There a rope, new like all the others, hung, the rather narrow noose curling slightly upwards. "One for the two of us," Sotnikov thought, although it was clear that this rope was for him. He must climb onto the block. He hesitated for a moment, until a reckless "Oh well, here goes!" suddenly burst forth desperately like an oath in his mind. "Here, hold on!" he said to gloomy paralyzed Rybak, and placed his sound knee on the block, which had a fresh dirty footmark on it. Rybak gripped the block with both hands to keep it from wobbling while Sotnikov rested his hand lightly on his back to keep his balance, tensed himself, gritted his teeth, and somehow managed to scramble up.

He stood there for a moment, his feet close together on the narrow round surface. He already felt the rough spine-chilling touch of the noose on the back of his neck. Below was the broad expanse of Rybak's back as he stood stooping, his horny hands firmly gripping the bark of the block. "So he's wriggled out of it, the bastard!" Sotnikov thought furiously, with a tinge of envy, and at once the doubt struck him that perhaps that wasn't really fair. Now, during his last moments on earth he had suddenly lost his former certainty of his right to demand the same from others as from himself. Rybak had been a reasonably good partisan, no doubt, he had been considered an experienced sergeant-major in the army, but as a human being and a citizen he clearly lacked something. Well, he had decided to survive at all costs, it was as simple as that.

Dyomchikha was still weeping and struggling to free herself from the policemen, German in yellow gloves had begun reading something from a paper—the sentence or perhaps a decree for the locals who had been forced to attend the execution. The last minutes of his life were ticking by, and Sotnikov stood motionless on the block, absorbing with a hungry farewell gaze the unglamorous but lifelong familiar scene of the small town street, with the mournful huddled figures, the puny trees, the rickety fence and the mound of ice by the iron water pump. Through the thin branches of the trees in the garden he could see the peeling walls of a nearby church, with a rusty tin roof and no crosses on the two faded

green domes. The few slit windows had been hastily boarded up...

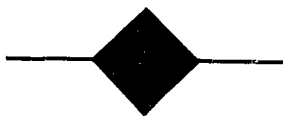
Some last residue of unopen strength welled up inside him, tempting him to strain and scream like Dyomchikha, wildly and hideously. But he somehow restrained himself, only his heart tightened painfully in a pre-death spasm. Now that the end had come he felt an irresistible urge to release all the brakes and cry his heart out. Instead he suddenly smiled for the last time what must have been a pitiful strained smile.

The officials gave an order, this time no doubt concerning him. The block of wood quaked beneath his feet and wobbled so that he almost fell off. Looking down he saw the desperate eyes of his erstwhile partisan comrade staring up at him from the twisted, stubbly face, and barely caught the words: "Sorry, mate!"

"Go to hell!" Sotnikov said curtly.

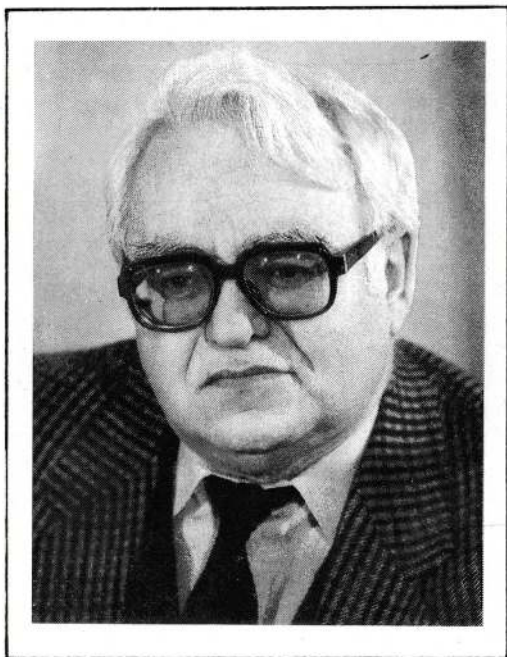
It was all over now. His eyes sought out the frozen stalk of the little boy in the Red Army helmet. He stood as before, a half-pace forward from the rest of the crowd, with wide-open eyes staring out of his white face. His gaze full of pain and fear was fixed on someone beneath the gallows and came closer and closer to him. Sotnikov did not know who was advancing there, but from the boy's face understood all there was to understand.

His support rocked once more in Rybak's suddenly enfeebled hands, as he squirmed with dread below him, doubtless hesitating before the last and most terrible act of what was required of him. But Budila swore vilely from behind him, and Sotnikov suddenly felt the support give way under his feet, and sunk heavily, choking, into the black, suffocating abyss.



Mikhail SHATROV

AND HIS MAIN THEMES



In the middle of 1988 sociologists of the V. I. Lenin State Library conducted an opinion poll to find out which books by modern authors are especially popular with library readers. Ranking high on the list, along with novels by Boris

Pasternak, Chinghiz Aitmatov, Vladimir Dudintsev, Anatoli Rybakov and Valentin Pikul, was Mikhail Shatrov's play *Onward... Onward... Onward!*

The fact speaks for itself. Not many plays are rated as bestsellers.

Actually, it is quite a unique occurrence.

Mikhail Shatrov's latest play, *Onward... Onward... Onward!*, has triggered more heated debates than any other work of Soviet fiction I can remember. This is, in fact, an indication of the people's attitude towards the recent history of the Soviet Union and the personalities who had the greatest impact on the country's development.

In this play Mikhail Shatrov elaborates on a theme he has been exploring for 30 years already, that is, the immediate post-revolutionary years, the heroism of some political leaders, the idealism of others and the unpardonable blunders of still others. With each new play the author has been expanding both his own and our understanding of the immediate post-revolutionary events and the problems which were already arising then to take shape in our times.

The second theme of Mikhail Shatrov's plays—contemporary times—is somewhat obscured by the first one, though there is no distinct boundary between the two, and his plays on modern events often converge with his historical ones as far as their moral implication is concerned. Actually, he

started his career by writing plays on modern problems. In 1956, he wrote *Clean Hands*, and a year later *A Place in Life*. Later the Soviet theatre staged his *Gleb Kosmachev*, *Modern Cuys*, *The Day of Silence*, *Przhewalsky's Horse*, *Weather Forecast for Tomorrow* and *My Hopes*.

One of his "second theme" plays, *The Dictatorship of Conscience*, met with an especially lively response from Soviet audiences. It is a stage "collage" in which the place and time of action are shifted freely from one century to another, and the characters are both historical figures and heroes of great novels, for instance, *The Possessed* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Staged at the very beginning of perestroika, the play has made a great contribution to the reform. The nature of the play and its production provided a rally atmosphere, involving the audience in the events presented on the stage. On some occasions members of the audience even began to argue with the stage character, thus turning a work of art into a piece of reality.

Yet, it was his "first theme" that made Mikhail Shatrov really famous. His first play about Lenin was

By the Name of Revolution, which is defined as heroic drama. This was in 1957, when the 40th anniversary of the Revolution was being celebrated. But the play had nothing to do with anniversary speeches. Staged by the Moscow Theatre for Young Spectators and written by a 25-year-old graduate of the mining institute, it made quite a stir. No matter how vague the outline of the characters might have been or how romantic in spirit, the character of the great leader of the Revolution was quite unorthodox.

However, only • beginning from his next two plays, *The Sixth of July* and *The Bolsheviks* can we speak of Shatrov as a serious innovator of Soviet Leniniana. These also laid the foundations for the duality of literary critics' views of the playwright's works. After they were staged, Shatrov would never be unanimously praised for having dared touch upon such a responsible subject. After the appearance of *The Sixth of July* and *The Bolsheviks*, in which romanticism was replaced by the harsh truth of History, some critics welcomed every ensuing play written by Shatrov, whereas others went out of their way to find fault

where no fault could be found.

It seems obvious enough that the Revolution was made by real people, each with his own character, temperament, philosophy and morality. Yet, some of them won, and others were defeated. Therefore, it is the duty of every honest artist dealing with the past to pay equal attention to both and depict them as objectively as he can. However, it has proved to be very hard to get rid of the stereotypes developed over the decades. This is why some people imagined that in *The Sixth of July* the author placed too great an emphasis on the leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party Maria Spiridonova, and in *The Bolsheviks* on Fanny Kaplan, who made an assassination attempt on Lenin. These people tried to squeeze the reality of that period into the framework of *A Concise Course of History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)* written in the 1930s under Stalin's close supervision. Their attempts were futile, and they blamed Shatrov instead of the sham *Concise Course*, which would have been more natural. But the accusations against *The Sixth of July* and *The*

Bolsheviks sounded like praise compared to the storm of protest against *Blue Horses on Red Grass* and *We Are Bound to Win!*

Lately it has become fashionable among Soviet writers to recall how many times each of them was attacked in the years of stagnation. One after another, popular writers who have won many prestigious awards in the recent past, remark in an interview that his life in that notorious period was full of privations, for his books were shelved and his initiative suppressed. Mikhail Shatrov does not belong to this category: he seems to be fully aware of the fact that "one doesn't choose the times: one lives and dies in them", as the poet A. Kushner put it. Indeed, Mikhail Shatrov had to overcome many difficulties in those years. His apparent success hid the exhausting struggle he had to wage then. Not a single play of his was immediately accepted for staging. Suffice it to recall that a four-part serial on Lenin, based on his script and commissioned by national TV, was shelved for over 15 years. When it was finally shown, it became clear that it was based purely on solid facts and contained nothing that would undermine society's

foundations.

The main thing Shatrov did was to restore the documentary character of Leniniana. He dared to throw out the false idols, and the country's recent history shown in his plays became convincing and realistic. Strange as it might seem, it was the playwright, not professional historians, who extracted the truth from thousands of petty lies. As soon as he drew public attention to a new fact, historians would attack him, defending the *Concise Course*. But as time elapsed, they had to make use of the documents to which the playwright had drawn their attention. Later on they even began to popularize Shatrov's ideas without even realizing it, which is quite remarkable.

We Are Bound to Win! is a good example of that. Lenin's famous *Letter to the Congress*, in which he expressed his opinion of all his close associates—Stalin, Trotsky, Kamenev, Bukharin and others—was first published in the USSR in 1956 by the *Kommunist* magazine. Twenty years later historians seemed to have forgotten the descriptions given by Lenin. When excerpts from the letter were reproduced in the Moscow Art Theatre's production of *We Are Bound to Win!*, they

proved to be real eye-openers for the majority of the audience, sad as it might sound. The interweaving of Lenin's ideas into the emotionally intense production was found offensive and even criminal by some. No wonder that the play, which the company wanted to premiere on the 110th anniversary of Lenin's birth, was only shown to the public much later—and it was by no means the theatre's fault.

Mikhail Shatrov said in one of his interviews: "The fact that the entire world today is so irresistibly attracted to the documentary genre can be attributed to the people's yearning for the naked truth, free of literary polishing. Indeed, writers tend to replace the facts with literary stereotypes which are deeply rooted in the human consciousness."

Well, one may agree or disagree with this statement. But Mikhail Shatrov has used documents successfully in his plays, which gives him the right to think as he does. Moreover, he has won an undeniable victory by introducing documentary texts into fiction.

What is the public reaction to Shatrov's plays? Why are they so heatedly debated all over the country?

The *Znamya* monthly has published quite an interesting selection of readers' letters on the dramatist's latest play. The people who expressed their opinions on *Onward... Onward... Onward!* come from all parts of the country and belong to all social strata—they are farmers, workers, scientists, etc. The range of opinions on the ideas expressed in the play is too broad to be described in detail. Let us read some of the letters instead. For example, a war veteran from Vilnius writes: "In your first issue (what a beginning!) I read a filthy libel by Shatrov. If only he lived in Vilnius, I would not mind visiting him and giving him a piece of my mind. How dared he slander one of the two greatest and most honest leaders of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, so dear to most Soviet patriots, in such a low and cowardly way after his death?!"

Another reader, a 37-year-old worker from the Moscow Region, has a different opinion of the play: "In disputes with my friends I used to tirelessly advocate the Stalinist methods, proving their efficiency by quotations from Stalin's works and 'undeniable' proofs, like our victory in collectivization and the

last war. Actually, it was the same standard set of arguments that Stalinists are still resorting to. However, neither my wife nor myself were ardent Stalinists, and we tried to eliminate the doubts that still crept into our minds in the existing 'historical vacuum' by pure logic. Our doubts increased when I began to study historical and dialectical materialism at evening classes. At that time the first publications filling in 'the blanks' in our past appeared in the press. Today I feel ashamed to have been indoctrinated by Stalinism. I don't think I'll ever be able to forgive myself for my moral, political and social short-sightedness. The blinkers seemed to fall off my eyes."

"I'll definitely try to get a copy of this play," writes a Party functionary from North Ossetia. "I would like to have it close at hand to re-read it when my work makes me feel

weary (it still happens, you know). You have inspired me with a new faith in justice, purity and intellect, and in the ultimate success of perestroika, into the bargain."

To be honest, no matter what critics or historians might say or how they might describe Mikhail Shatrov's plays in their learned articles, the readers' letters have a special significance. Isn't the love or hatred expressed in them the best reward for any writer?

It is too early to sum up Shatrov's literary work. Trite as it may sound, he is still on the road. His future works may supplement what he has written in the past, or refute it—art has its own laws. What is undeniable, is that the essence of his future plays will form the continuation of his earlier works.

Mikhail LATYSHEV

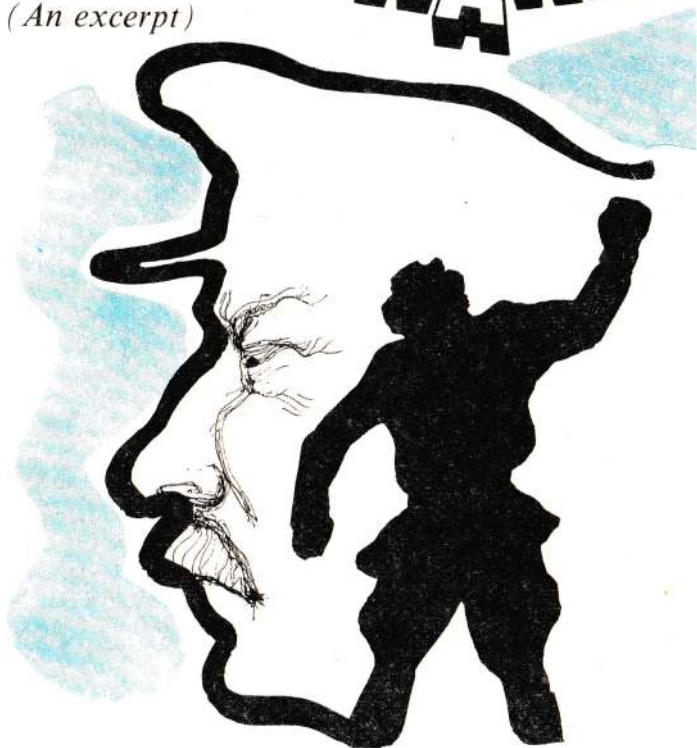
Mikhail SHATROV

ONWARD...

ONWARD...

ONWARD!

(An excerpt)



S talin: What's the matter, Sergo? What do you want? Why on earth did you phone so late at night and wake me up?

Ordzhonikidze: The NKVD* has searched my place.

Stalin: So what? They have the right to come and search mine, too—that's nothing unusual...

Ordzhonikidze: Tonight all my deputies and all the department chiefs of the People's Commissariat for Heavy Industry have been arrested. (*He can hardly control himself.*) What does it mean?

Stalin: I should be the one asking you what it means! I warned you at a Politburo meeting that your connivance with the enemies of the people and your currying favour with such hardened bastards as Bukharin and Rykov, would do you a bad service and inevitably tell upon your morality.

Ordzhonikidze: Leave morality out of this.

Stalin: And what about your behaviour at Klim's birthday ceremony? The Politburo walks down the aisle towards the stage, and Ordzhonikidze publically squeezes between the rows to embrace Rykov, a man on his way to the gallows! And all the Politburo members had to stand on the stage like fools, waiting just for Comrade Ordzhonikidze! What did you want to prove and to whom? To me? Ushen mama dzaglo!

Ordzhonikidze: What d'you want Bukharin and Rykov for? Haven't you shed enough blood?

Stalin: Do you realize who you're talking to?!

Ordzhonikidze: I'm talking to you. Sit down, will you. (*Stalin obeys, quite unexpectedly for himself.*) Tell me who Lenin described as "the favourite of the whole party"? You? Me? Who was by Lenin's bedside when he died? You? Me? He was with Lenin when he died! And you want him shot in the back of the head? What evidence have you got?

Stalin: Didn't you read his statement?

Ordzhonikidze: Trust Yezhov, and he'll get a statement against you!

Stalin: I don't need any evidence. Let him prove to us that he means no harm! He's always blabbing that our law enforcement bodies are rotten, and even that they are plotting against the party! (*He smiles.*) So we'll send him to the NKVD to check it from the inside.

* NKVD is an abbreviation for the People's Commissariat of the Interior.

Ordzhonikidze : He's at home nursing his newly-born baby, but the verdict is already obvious. What's the point of holding a plenary meeting in four days' time? Do you want us to tighten the noose around his neck for you? I saw Pyatakov before the trial and didn't recognize him. What did you do to him? Did you permit them to torture our men because the Nazis torture Communists in the West? But our people are not Nazis! Who do you rank yourself as? Lenin brought us together on an ideological basis, and you rely on fear and blood, claiming that everything is permissible!

Stalin: What's the matter with you, Sergo? Why are you chickening out? There's a fierce battle under way: you and I have warned the party about it more than once. Our enemies are being exterminated; the two of us have been preparing it for a long time. What doubts do you have?

Ordzhonikidze: I doubt you!

Stalin: Are you looking for death or what?

Ordzhonikidze (*calmly*): I am.

Stalin (*aware of danger*): What's up with you, mate? Was it the search that upset you so much? I'll tell Yezhov to teach those bastards a lesson, devil take them...

Ordzhonikidze: Why did you arrest those boys, Andrei Sverdlov and Dmitri Osinsky?

Stalin: They're too liberal... They think and talk too much...

Ordzhonikidze: Do you have a monopoly on thought?

Stalin (*playfully*): Get out of here, you! To think that this son of a bitch is my old friend!

Ordzhonikidze (*authoritatively*): Sit!

Stalin: You don't need to get so upset, my dear fellow! I'm sure we can sort something out. Who was arrested without good reason?

Ordzhonikidze: Do I have to ask you to spare your own brother-in-law, your wife's brother? Didn't he bring up your son, Yakov? And you throw him into gaol as a sign of gratitude!

Stalin: Don't worry, we'll let him out! Good friends like us can always come to an agreement. Who else do you want to plead for?

Ordzhonikidze: For everyone you've turned over to your men... for the party... for the army... for my colleagues. I know you've got a plan, and you won't rest until you've

finished off everybody on the list. I beg you to spare all of them. Do you want me to go down on my knees?

Stalin: Dear Sergo, calm down... You are so naive that you love and trust everybody... All of them overfulfil their quotas at your factories, even the saboteurs. Why do they do it, I ask you? To worm their way into your confidence...

Ordzhonikidze: So that's it! Now you've thought up a way to seize the best people! Why do you need so many of them? Who was the bastard who convinced you that a prisoner's slave labour is profitable for socialism?

Stalin: As compared to our great goals, Sergo, this is all absolutely irrelevant—it's the price all pioneers have to pay, I assure you... Nobody will think twice about it. They'll be proud of your industry and the factories you set up for the benefit of the party and the people.

Ordzhonikidze: It wasn't me, it was the people you're having shot like criminals!

Stalin: You bear a grudge against Molotov because you think he persecutes you, cuts the funds and meddles in your affairs, but he recommended you for the Order of Lenin the other day, for the Magnitka project. I was against it because I knew you had enough decorations to cover your chest with. My idea was to name another city after you. But the comrades insisted on you having both. What could Comrade Stalin do, faced with such opposition? He had to give in, of course!

Ordzhonikidze (*thinking aloud*): I remember the 17th Party Congress, when the armourers of Tula congratulated us and presented you with one of their products, a sniper gun. You accepted it, then raised it to your eye, aimed it at the audience and held it there for a while... What an ovation the delegates gave you! How happy they were!.. Three years haven't passed since, and how many of them have you killed already?

Stalin: Yes, the Victors' Congress... Don't remind me of those whores! Sure, they praised me to the skies, but how many of them then voted against me? Do you think that's fair? Is that the way for party members to behave?

Ordzhonikidze: But that toady of yours, Kaganovich, rigged the ballot so that there were only three votes against you, the same as against Kirov—what's there to worry about?

Stalin: I prefer to fight face to face, looking the enemy in the eye.

Ordzhonikidze: When he's tied hand and foot.

Stalin: I don't believe you're saying this!

Ordzhonikidze: Don't be ridiculous, Koba. We've known each other for ages.

Stalin: It was always you who acted behind my back. How many times was the issue of a new Secretary-General debated? Wasn't it discussed in a Kislovodsk cave? Or at Petrovsky's in 1926? Didn't Smirnov and Tolmachev raise the matter too? Wasn't it discussed in Moscow before the 17th Congress? And you were present at all the discussions!

Ordzhonikidze: Nearly all of them. And I never let those people raise a hand against you!

Stalin: I summoned Kirov, but he didn't dare look me in the eye: he was afraid. "Do they want you to become Secretary-General?" I asked him. He had the heart to admit it. And after that I had so many votes against me... Wasn't it his doing? Only the two of you dared oppose even the most clear-cut decisions at Politburo meetings.

Ordzhonikidze: As for you, you'd walk out, slam the door behind you, wait until Kirov or Kaganovich came for you and then condescend to return.

Stalin: You and Kirov always plotted against me.

Ordzhonikidze: No, we didn't.

Stalin: You were friends, weren't you? That means you were in it together. Do you think I didn't know or sense how much your Sergei hated me and how he supported the opposition? We'd say "Get them!", and he'd go out of his way to protect them. We'd say the Trotskyites and Zinovievists were active in Leningrad, and he'd report back that all was quiet. He curried favour with all those people! What for, I ask you? Who did he oppose himself to? In Paris, Bukharin told his friends that Kirov was their only hope as far as a change of policy was concerned. So we had every right to criticize him. He denied it the first time, but he didn't the second. I hate double play! He wouldn't look me in the eye!.. Believe it or not, he wanted to live...

Ordzhonikidze: What? What did you say?

Stalin: Do you remember his speech at the Congress? Some scribbler wrote a very effective ending for it. I memorized it... "As a human, I would like to live forever, but look what's going on around. It's a fact!" The audience was in uproar for ten minutes then—they simply worshipped him...

Ordzhonikidze: It was you who killed him!

Stalin: What?!

Ordzhonikidze: I've known for a long time that Yagoda did it to please you, but I've only just realized that you were in the know.

Stalin: Shenì deda vatiŕe! How dare you! What proof do you have?

Ordzhonikidze: What do I need proof for? What an idiot I was to come here and ask you for a favour! I was still hoping for something... Now everything has fallen into place. Go away!

Stalin: No, I won't go now. It's getting interesting.

Ordzhonikidze: Aren't you scared? You know me well enough.

Stalin: As well as you know me. I'm not scared. Now, what has fallen into place for you, Grigori Konstantinovich?

Ordzhonikidze: A man who has killed one person is a murderer, whereas a man who has killed hundreds of thousands is a great leader. Is it really only a question of numbers?

Stalin: I'll never forgive you for that! But go on, dear friend. I'm dying to know what you are driving at.

Ordzhonikidze: What are you? A counter-revolutionary dreaming of restoring capitalism? Nonsense! But how can our workers profit by all-round nationalization when there's nothing but tyranny around? You corrupt everything you touch... The people you put behind bars are left to a terrible fate. But what about those who are still at home? What have you done to the living? Why all this sneaking and fear? The revolution wants people with a sensitive conscience, not a dumb one. But what about you?

Stalin: You know what the revolution wants, do you? That's absolutely ridiculous! What business is it of yours?

Ordzhonikidze: Why did you become a revolutionary? To become a god or to change people's lives for the better? What happened to you, and when? I knew you to be a different person. Only Lenin could see...

Stalin (*rising to his feet*): Why do you all pester me with your Lenin?!

Ordzhonikidze: Don't you dare! I'll hit you! (*Stalin sits down, realizing that he means it.*) Pushkin's description of Salieri fits you, too. "It is my task to stop him."... "Music I dissected like a corpse. Proved its harmonies like higher mathematics..." That says everything... Zina and I learned it by heart in exile... What a musical poem! How beautiful! Who would have thought that I would find it so useful?

Stalin (*furiously*): That's why I prefer people who support me out of fear, not out of conviction, for you change your views like gloves! If you are such a devout Marxist, if you understand it all so well, where were you before? Why didn't you jump to your feet, grab me by the hand and talk me out of it? We were in it together, I wouldn't take a step without you, and now you refuse to share my responsibility! Wasn't it you who exterminated all those opposition bastards with me? Have you chickened out? You're pathetic! No one is courageous or determined enough to follow me to the end! They're as weak as women!

Ordzhonikidze: I've only just realized that you deliberately aggravated the food crisis and all the other ones. You had a reason for refusing to deal with them in a normal, peaceful way... You want another civil war... You want a fire... Then you'll be up to the mark...

Stalin: Tell me, who set you against me? Who dared to destroy our friendship? Do you remember who saved you when your Lenin suggested expelling you from the party? Or don't you know the meaning of gratitude? Take your chance now that I'm in a kind and sentimental mood! Say you are sorry!

Ordzhonikidze (*ignoring him*): Aren't you afraid of revenge? It will strike you sooner or later, even if you are saved by death... I know you're scared because you check under the bed you're going to sleep in, with a lamp or a torch. You're afraid all right. I always wondered where that strange habit came from. You do it out of fear. How could you destroy yourself like that, Koba? You have no friends—only flunkys. You don't even have a woman who loves you... You are consumed by one passion—lust for power and cruelty. Tell me, how can you enjoy watching women and children cry? Or men? What is so appealing about it? Or do you simply enjoy your power to kill or pardon?

Stalin: Bastard! I had your elder brother, Papulia, shot, and I promise you I'll exterminate all the Ordzhonikidzes! All of them! I can guarantee you that!

Ordzhonikidze: The Russians are the kindest and most forgiving people in the world, but they still remember the Tatar yoke. And they'll remember you.

Stalin: You know yourself that you have only one way out now. I grant it to you for the sake of our old friendship.

Ordzhonikidze: I decided to do it this morning. I wish I could shoot you instead of myself. But I'm not strong

enough. We've turned you into a symbol... No, an idol of the October Revolution—that's why we'd rather die than raise a hand against you... I can't count on forgiveness! You're right, I was in it with you... I can't be forgiven! I curse the day when I believed in you and followed you!

Stalin: Don't hope that your death will damage me. I'll say you died of heart failure.

Ordzhonikidze: I know there will be revenge. Sooner or later they'll come after you, alive or dead. And now go away!

Stalin exits. A sharp burst of music drowns the shot.



ONWARD... ONWARD... ONWARD!

Chinghiz AITMATOV—

THE WRITER AND CITIZEN



He phoned me about midnight and said slowly: "I'm ready for an interview. Why don't you come over?"

I rushed across Moscow in a taxi to see the world-famous writer, hastily making

up the questions I was to ask him. What could I ask him? It seemed to me that everything about him was already known. The publications on Chinghiz Aitmatov greatly outnumbered his own works.

Thorough studies have been written on each of his books—Jamilya, The White Steamer, A Day That Longer Than an Age Does Last and The Executioner's Block. In addition, there are numerous books dwelling on the writer's own life and work. Every period of his artistic career has been studied in detail and classified. He has given innumerable interviews, though he swore not to waste his time on them on many occasions. What could the writer tell me about himself and his work that was new?

"Well, life holds many surprises," I thought to myself. "Even if Chinghiz Aitmatov had given a press conference only yesterday, today is a new day, opening up a new page of life and giving rise to new cares, new doubts. This is especially true nowadays, when every hour of our life has an impact on history and is probably equal to an era. And millions of people value the opinion of a respected writer and trust him."

When we met, Chinghiz Aitmatov immediately started talking about the most topical and painful problems of today.

He said: "At last we are beginning to see the light. Rubbing our eyes and looking back, we can see gaping voids. It is terrible to think what might have become of us if we had continued to live the way we did, substituting ritual verbiage for actions. Until recently many of our ideas on life were expressed by cliches about our country being the most progressive state in the world, our reader the best-educated and everything Soviet the most advanced. Hypnotized by the sweet words, we suppressed our sense of reality and chose to ignore the fact that the rest of the world was far ahead of us in many respects. Our goal ceased to be realistic. Remember: 'The present generation of Soviet people will live under communism'? What debasement and hideous make-believe!"

Could you tell us why your *Executioner's Block* raises an issue that used to be taboo for the press—drug addiction and the associated inner emptiness of Man? Did you feel that a radical change was in the air?

"Yes, I think I sensed a change. In this particular case, narcotics are only part of the problem. Let's speak about more important things. I often had a feeling that we

were going through a bad period, and that very soon we'd begin to see the light. After all, we were not totally stupid. Don't you think that what's going on now has opened our eyes? Slowly but surely, we are casting off the chains of self-satisfaction, self-delusion and arrogance. No one now claims that we have made another achievement or are way ahead of some other country."

For some reason, a statement which you made in one of your interviews comes to mind. I quote: "Real history has only just started. Only now will it become clear to us how mature our society is and to what extent it can be the master of its own achievements... We are sure to win, and it's going to be an unprecedented triumph." It seemed to me at the time that your words had a special implication. Remember that it was in January 1984, not in April 1985, or in 1986.

"Indeed, like many other people, I was always acutely aware of a monstrous lack of democracy, and sometimes of its complete absence. Even today we are not ready to take it at its face value. Democracy

is a great responsibility, to be instilled in people over many generations. It doesn't only mean freedom of speech and the press—that would be too primitive. Democracy in action is, first and foremost, a most sophisticated process of developing mutual tolerance and respect, both between individuals and different social strata. It is a very difficult and even dramatic process of forming a new outlook on the destiny of society.

"Since the kind of democracy we needed so badly in the past existed mostly on paper, I think that today the true meaning of socialism is becoming more and more obvious. I believe that humanity's ultimate goal is best expressed through democracy. One can use any term to define a political system, but if it does not provide for the true liberation of the spirit, nothing will come of it. Happiness is a highly individual, personal feeling, but there also exists a concept of social happiness. Well, I think that the happiness of socialism can only be achieved under complete and irreversible democracy permeating all spheres of social life and personal existence."

Indeed, we observed such a period after the 20th Party Congress.

Literary critics believe that those years were decisive for your own career, for between 1956 and 1963 you wrote your *Stories of the Mountains and Steppes* which, incidentally, brought you a Lenin Prize. What do you think?

"Yes, I was lucky to have lived and worked at that time. Those six or seven years meant a great deal to all of us. In that period a new generation of writers came into existence, and they are still the driving force of our modern literature. It's good that they were young at the time. And I was young, too. It enabled me to preserve my dignity and hope for many years.

"Today the curtain has, fortunately, risen again. In those years we only had a premonition of hope, whereas today we realize that the changes occurring in society are irreversible. That is why I expect the literary and artistic volcano to erupt soon. Though I'm afraid that since Valentin Rasputin we've grown aware of a gap in the next generation of authors. Something has come to a standstill, or slowed down, both in Russian and other ethnic literatures... The potential of the formula 'The Word

was God' seems to have gone amiss.

"I think that our times are favourable for great discoveries. If a new great novelist or poet emerges tomorrow and shatters our imagination, it will be only natural. I don't mind if he overshadows us all; we'll welcome his appearance like a dream come true."

Is it true that your father, Torekul Aitmatov, and his brothers Ryskulbek and Alemkul, all village activists, were purged in 1937? I have only recently heard about it.

"Yes, it's true. Although it's fifty years ago now, I still mourn them. I've never mentioned the fact in public: this is the first time that I've discussed it. I don't want other people to misinterpret me. Even if it had not happened, I would still have opposed Stalin's cult. Even now, many people fail to understand what terrible damage it did to Soviet society. Stalin's cult rendered socialism an awful blow and maimed it. We were trapped in the authoritarian regime established by Stalin for far too long. It is only now that Stalin is no more, that we have started to cast off the chains of slavery. Only today has our society begun to overcome the

awful consequences of those dark years, and it is not at all easy, since his supporters are still numerous. They deliberately close their eyes to new developments and oppose any changes. If we manage to get rid of our historical inferiority complex once and for all, it would be a great political and spiritual achievement for perestroika."

You said that you sensed a social change when you decided to write *The Executioner's Block*. What do you sense now? Is it linked with your next work? What are you going to write about?

"Well, I find it hard to put my premonition into words, but I do have one. Maybe it's to do with the feeling that we have withstood the current trial. It has been a great test for us all, set by the future. I realize the price that has to be paid for it. It is not easy at all to discard habitual self-delusion to defy lies and face the naked truth. Unbiased criticism and the admission of one's faults always demand a great deal of personal effort. And we spared ourselves for such a long time!

"If I write something (and I'm about to start on a new novel) it will be based on this premonition of mine, that is, the price paid for the trial..."

Don't you think that some of your books were time-serving, to a certain extent, and have failed the test of Time?

"I must admit that my feature stories, speeches and interviews were time-serving. There is no denying it. But I did realize that even a piece of journalism had to remain valid for a long period, and I tried hard to be up to the task..."

Paul Gauguin said: "In Art I'm always right." Can you say the same about yourself?

"Yes, I can. I don't mean to say that I've reached the summit and that everything I've written is a masterpiece but I feel I'm right to think that beauty is just and evil is ugly."

"Do you have your own laws of art?

"I've never thought about it. I don't know what my laws are or how they were shaped. But there is an original, essential, humanitarian idea in my work of what's good and what's bad."

Felix MEDVEDEV

Chinghiz AITMATOV

THE EXECUTIONER'S BLOCK

(An excerpt)





nd they were trying Avdi Kallistratov—five hardened drunks—Ober-Kandalov, Mishash, Kepa, Hamlet-Galkin and Aboriginal-Uzyukbai. To be precise, Hamlet-Galkin and Aboriginal-Uzyukbai were only present at the trial, and made timid and pathetic attempts to mollify the fierceness of the other three, who were the main judges.

The fact was that late in the afternoon Avdi had been seized with the same madness as the other time, in the railway carriage, and this gave the gang a pretext for the reprisals. The Moyun-Kum saiga hunt had made such a horrible impression on him that he demanded to put an end to the slaughter at once, and appealed to the blood-thirsty hunters to repent and pray to God. He asked Hamlet-Galkin and Uzyukbai to join him and leave the rest of Ober-Kandalov's gang, to raise the alarm, turn their thoughts towards God, the Merciful Creator, and beg His forgiveness for the evil which they, humans, had done to living Nature, for only their profound repentance could set their hearts at rest.

Avdi screamed, raised his arms to the sky and appealed to them to join him at once, to foresake evil and repent.

He was funny and absurd in his madness, he screamed and dashed around, as if anticipating the end of the world—it seemed to him that everything was going to hell, falling into a fiery abyss.

He wanted to convert those who had come here to make money... He tried to stop the colossal slaughter machine raging in the vastness of the Moyun-Kum steppe, to curb that devastating mechanical power...

He wanted to defeat the invincible...

Then, on Mishash's advice, he was bound hand and foot and thrown into the truck containing the carcasses of the slaughtered saigas.

"Lie there till you die, you bugger," Mishash shouted at him, wheezing with the strain. "Or pray to your God! Maybe, He'll hear you and descend to you from heaven, damn you!.."

Night had fallen, and the moon rose over the Moyun-Kum steppe devastated by the bloody hunt, where all the living things, even the wolves, had witnessed the collapse of the world...

As for the devastators, apart from Avdi Kallistratov, for whom the Moyun-Kum desert had turned out to be a fatal place, they rejoiced unanimously...

That was why they were trying him now...

Pulling Avdi out of the truck, Mishash and Kepa dragged him to Ober and forced him to go down on his knees before the boss. Ober-Kandalov sat on an empty box, the flaps of his misshapen coat pushed back, and his feet set wide apart in their tarpaulin boots. In the glow of the truck side-lights he looked unnaturally large, gloomy and extremely sinister. By his side, near the camp-fire, which still smelled of the kebabs made from fresh saiga meat, stood the two shivering figures of Hamlet-Galkin and Aboriginal-Uzyukbai. As they had already had a few drinks, they waited for Ober to try Avdi, smiling incongruously, whispering together, nudging each other and winking from time to time.

"Now," Ober mouthed at last, looking contemptuously at Avdi who stood on his knees before him, "have you thought it over?"

"Untie my hands," said Avdi.

"Your hands, you say? Has it occurred to you why they were tied up? It's usually rebels, conspirators and violators of law and order who have their hands tied up! Violators, do you hear? Violators!"

Avdi was silent.

"All right, we'll untie your hands and see how you behave," said Ober, mollified. "Untie his hands, will you," he ordered. "He'll need them soon."

"I don't see why the bugger should be untied," Mishash grumbled, cutting the rope behind Avdi's back. "Guys like him should be drowned like puppies. They should be bundled up and buried alive."

Now that the rope had been removed, Avdi realized how numb his arms and hands had grown.

"Well, we've done what you asked," said Ober-Kandalov. "You still have a chance. To begin with, have a drink!" And he offered Avdi a glass of vodka.

"No, I won't drink," Avdi said firmly.

"Then choke on it, you bastard!" Ober mouthed, and with a sharp movement he threw the contents of the glass straight into Avdi's face. Taken unawares, the latter nearly choked and jumped to his feet. But Mishash and Kepa grabbed him and forced him down again.

"Yes, you will, you bugger!" Mishash roared. "Didn't I tell you that guys like him should be drowned?! Come on, Ober, pour another glass for him! I'll empty it down his throat, and if he doesn't drink, I'll do him in!"

The edge of the glass, squashed down by Mishash's large hand, cut Avdi's face. Choking on vodka and his own blood, Avdi broke away and started lashing out at Mishash and Kepa with his hands and feet.

"C'mon, stop it, guys! Why should he drink if he doesn't want to? We'll drink it ourselves!" Hamlet-Galkin whimpered, running around the fighting men. Aboriginal-Uzyukbai quickly hid himself behind the truck, and his scared face peeped out around the corner, while he tried to make up his mind whether to stay and watch—there was still plenty of vodka left—or to disappear and keep out of harm's way... Only Ober-Kandalov sat where he was, on his box-throne, watching the fight as if it were a circus act.

Hamlet-Galkin ran up to Ober.

"Can't you stop them, Ober? If they kill him, we'll end up in prison!"

"In prison, you say?" Ober snorted contemptuously. "What prison in the Moyun-Kum Desert?! I'm the court here! Nobody'll be able to prove anything. He could've been eaten by wolves. They won't find any evidence or witnesses."

Avdi lost consciousness and fell under their feet. They started kicking him with their boots. Avdi's last thought was about Inga: what would become of her, he thought, there was no one in the world who could love her as much as he did.

He could not hear anything, and the light faded before his eyes, but he suddenly had a vision of a grey she-wolf, the one that had jumped over him in the cannabis steppe that hot summer...

"Save me, wolf!" Avdi suddenly burst out.

He probably sensed that the pair of wolves, Akbara and Tashchainar, were approaching their old territory occupied by the humans that night. The beasts wanted to spend the night in their own den—that was why they had returned, doubtless hoping that the humans had already left their ravine and were far away...

But the sinister truck still loomed over the place, and from there came cries and the sounds of fighting and blunt kicks...

The wolves had to turn back to the steppe again. Exhausted and restless, they ran off blindly, not thinking where they were going... The humans had turned their days and nights into a nightmare. They strolled on slowly, and the moon cast its light on their dark forms, their tails between their legs...

And the trial, or rather, the lynching, continued...

Dead drunk, the hunters did not notice that the accused, Avdi Kallistratov, made almost no attempt to get to his feet when he was knocked down again.

"Get up, you lousy priest," Mishash bawled, trying to make him stand by cursing and kicking him hard, but Avdi could only moan feebly. Enraged, Ober-Kandalov grabbed him as if he were a sack of potatoes, and hoisted him off the ground. Holding him by the collar, he hissed into his face, his fury mounting as he spoke: "So you want to scare us with God, you bastard! You decided to put the fear of God into us, eh? We ain't afraid of no God—that's where you're wrong, you son-of-a-bitch! Who do you think you are? We're on a state mission here, and you dare sabotage the region's quota! That means you're a bastard, an enemy of the people and the state. There's no place for enemies and saboteurs like you! It was Stalin who said: 'Whoever is not with us, is against us.' The enemies of the people should be exterminated without mercy! If the enemy refuses to give up, he's killed like a mad dog! In the army they'd send such bastards to the firing squad—that's what they'd do! To wipe the scum off the face of the earth! D'you know what you are doing, you church rat? You are sabotaging our plans! Getting us into trouble! I'll strangle you with my own hands, you bastard and enemy of the people, and they'll thank me heartily because you are an agent of imperialism! Do you think now that Stalin's dead, there'll be no one to punish you? Down on your knees, you church bugger! I'm the court here: denounce your God, or it'll be the end of you!"

Avdi collapsed, unable to stand on his knees, but they pulled him up.

"Answer me, you bastard!" Ober-Kandalov thundered. "Denounce your God! Say there's no God!"

"There is a God," Avdi moaned feebly.

"There is, is there?" Mishash screeched like crazy. "Didn't I tell you? He's doing it out of spite!"

Choking with rage, Ober-Kandalov began to shake Avdi by the collar again.

"Now, God-seeker, we'll put on a show you'll never forget! Drag him to that tree over there! We'll hang him on it, bugger him!" shouted Ober-Kandalov. "And we'll light a small fire under his feet, too, to smoke him properly!"

So the whole gang grabbed Avdi and dragged him to a crooked saxaul tree, with its branches spread over the edge of the ravine.

"Fetch the ropes," Ober-Kandalov ordered Kepa.

Kepa ran back to the cabin.

"Hey, you! Bugger you, Uzyukbai and you too, you piss-artist, why the hell are you standing aside? Come here and join us! If you don't, you'll never set eye on vodka again!" roared Ober-Kandalov to scare the pathetic little drunks, and they rushed towards the saxaul, eager to hang the wretched Avdi.

What had started out as a funny idea suddenly acquired sinister overtones. A bad farce threatened to turn into a lynching.

"The only thing, curse it, is that you can't get a cross or nails in this bloody steppe. That's too bad," Mishash said regretfully, breaking the saxaul branches, which cracked, giving way. "Wouldn't it be great to crucify him?"

"What's the bloody difference? We'll tie him up with the rope. It'll hold him as fast as nails," suggested Ober-Kandalov, pleased to find a solution. "We'll stretch him out like a frog and tie him up so tight that he won't be able to move! Let him hang till morning and think about God! I'll teach him a lesson he'll remember as long as he lives, bugger him! Bloody church rat! I'll show him what's what! In the Army I broke better men than him! C'mon, guys, take him! Lift him to that branch! Higher! Tie his hands to that branch and his feet to this one!"

It was all over in an instant because Avdi could not fight back. Tied up to the crooked saxaul by hand and foot, he sagged like a freshly removed hide, strung out to dry. Their curses and shouts still reached him, but as if from afar. His suffering drained him of strength. His side was hurting terribly in the area of the liver and something broken or burst in his back gave out an excruciating pain. Avdi's strength was slowly running out of his body. He no longer cared that his drunken torturers were making futile attempts to lay a fire under his feet. He was indifferent to everything. Nothing came of their attempts: the grass and branches were so wet from the previous day's snowfall that they would not burn... It did not occur to any of them splash some petrol over the firewood. They were too pleased at seeing Avdi Kallistratov hanging on the tree, like a scarecrow in a vegetable garden. The very sight of his figure, as if crucified or hanged, brightened their spirits and thrilled them no end. Ober-Kandalov was especially enthusiastic. He was dreaming up

other sights and actions, far more inspiring and thrilling, which would outdo that execution in the steppe.

"Mind you, the same will happen to anyone who's not with us!" he said menacingly, eyeing Avdi's figure on the saxaul. "I'd hang any man who is against us and leave him to die. I'd hang all those who are not with us in a row, around the world, like a hoop, and then there would be no one to resist us! Everybody would tow the line! Come on, commissars, let's have another drink together..."

Echoing Ober, they walked noisily over to the truck, and Ober suddenly burst into a song which no one else knew: "We'll put on our army pants, and fasten our holsters to the belts... One, two, one, two..."

His flushed companions echoed: "One, two... One, two...", and, drinking in turn, straight out of the bottle, they polished off another litre of vodka.

Some time later the engine started up, the headlights flared and the truck slowly moved away across the steppe. Nothing broke the darkness and silence of the night. Avdi, tied up to the tree, was alone in the world. His chest was burning, and the pain in his smashed innards was unbearable. His consciousness was sinking, like a little island in a flood.

"My little island in the Oka... Who will save you, Teacher?" he thought, and his last thought flashed up and died away like a spark...

That was the last flow of his life...

And his unseeing eyes beheld a boundless expanse of water without beginning or end. The water seethed noiselessly, and silent waves rolled over it like the snow swirls in a field, coming from nowhere and vanishing into nothing. But a human figure could be distinguished on the very horizon over the silent sea. Avdi recognized that man: it was his father, Deacon Kallistratov. All of a sudden Avdi heard his own youthful voice reciting his father's favourite prayer for a sunken ship, the way he had done in his childhood, standing by their old piano. Only now the distance between them was enormous, and the boyish voice was ringing enthusiastically across the Universe: "The sun has not yet risen, and the world is asleep..."

"Oh, Lord, most Merciful, Blessed and Righteous, forgive me for bothering you with incessant prayers. There is no selfishness in my prayer—I am not begging for worldly riches or for you to lengthen my life. But I will never cease to pray

about the salvation of human souls. Oh God, the Forgiving, don't leave us in the dark, don't let us excuse ourselves by the vagueness of the boundary between good and evil on Earth. Open humanity's eyes, and I will never ask anything for myself. I am not afraid of any end: I will humbly burn in hell or rejoice in your eternal Kingdom in Heaven. It is up to you to cast our lots, Oh Invisible and Ubiquitous Creator...

"I am praying for one thing, and it is all-important to me...

"Please work a miracle for me: let that ship follow the same course, day after day, night after night, while the light and darkness alternate according to your 'eternal law' of Earth's rotation in space. May that ship sail from ocean to ocean, with an unchanging watch, and its guns in their slip-covers forever. May the waves break against its stern with an incessant rumble and roar. May the ocean spray it with whispering rain, may it breathe in its bitter, volatile moisture. May it hear the creaking of the deck, the rumble of the machinery in the hold and the cries of the seagulls following it with the fair wind. And may that ship always sail towards a bright city on a distant shore, never to be reached... Amen."

The voice gradually died away, and Avdi heard his own cry over the ocean...

And all night long the full moon shone brightly over the boundless Moyun-Kum steppe, casting its light on the still figure of the man crucified on the saxaul. The figure resembled a big bird with its wings spread out, which had been just about to fly when it was struck down and thrown into the tree.

Half a kilometre away from that spot stood the same army truck covered with canvas. Inside it, on the saiga carcasses, the criminals, Ober-Kandalov's men, slept in their own stinking vomit. Their thick, hoarse snoring broke the silence of the night. They had driven away to leave Avdi alone till dawn: they wanted to teach him a lesson and make him feel abandoned, so that he would denounce his God and learn to worship strength...

This punishment had been thought up by the former actor, Hamlet-Galkin, after he had lost count of his drinks and was knocking back vodka as if it were tasteless, dead water. Hamlet-Galkin had made this suggestion to please Ober-Kandalov, saying that fear would only do the God-seeker good. Let him think that they had hanged him and

gone away for good, and he could not even move a finger when all he wanted was to follow them!

In the morning, at dawn, the wolves cautiously approached their former dwelling. Akbara led the way, and her gloomy, lame Tashchainar followed. The humans were no longer there—they had vanished at night. But the beasts walked on that ground, if it may be referred to as such, as gingerly as if it were mined. They encountered alien, hostile things: a dead camp-fire, empty cans, crushed glass, the sharp smell of rubber and iron lingering in the tyre tracks and empty bottles still stinking of alcohol. Intending to leave this fouled place for good, the wolves were walking along the edge of the ravine when Akbara suddenly leapt into the air and recoiled: she saw a man! Two steps away a man was hanging on a saxaul tree, his arms wide apart and his head slumped sideways. Akbara charged for the bushes, with Tashchainar bringing up the rear. The man on the saxaul did not move. The wind whispered in the branches and stirred a lock of hair on his white forehead. Akbara pressed her body against the ground and strained her muscles, ready to spring forward. In front of her was a human, the most terrible creature in the world, the source of all the wolves' troubles and their irreconcilable enemy. Seething with uncontrollable rage, Akbara was about to take a running jump, throw herself at the man and put her teeth into his throat when she suddenly recognized him. Yes, she had seen him, but where? Oh, yes, it was the eccentric whom she had seen in summer, when she had taken her cubs out into the steppe to breathe in the fragrance of the grasses. At that decisive moment Akbara recalled that summer day, and how she had taken pity on him and jumped over his crouching figure with his arms held protectively over his head. She recalled the stupefied expression of his frightened eyes and his naked, vulnerable body running away from her...

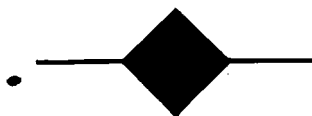
Now that man was hanging strangely on a low saxaul tree, like a bird stuck among the branches. She could not understand whether he was alive or dead. He did not move or utter a sound, his head was rolled over to one side, and a thin stream of blood ran out of a corner of his mouth. Tashchainar was about to attack the hanging man, but Akbara pushed him aside. Coming nearer, she looked closely into the crucified man's face and whimpered softly: her summer cubs were all dead, and their life in the Moyun-Kum desert was ruined. And there was no one she could complain to... That man could not help her: his end was near, even if his body was still

warm. With a tremendous effort the man opened his eyes and whispered to the grieving she-wolf: "You've come..." And his head fell down on his chest.

Those were his last words.

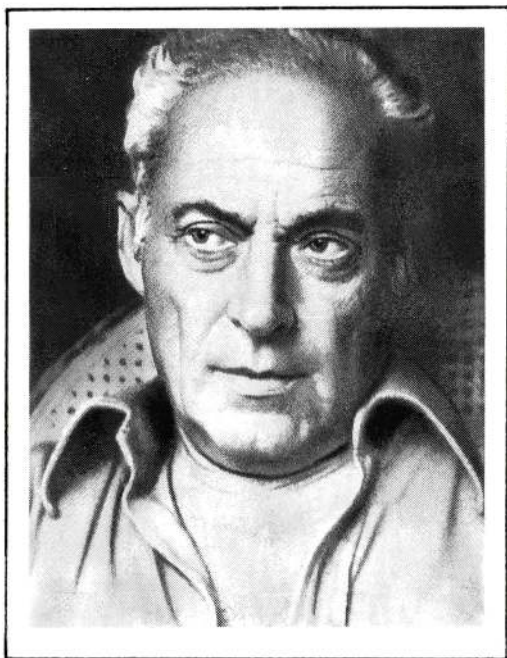
At that moment they heard an engine roaring, and a military-type truck came into view. The vehicle approached, looming larger, the glass of the cabin glittering dimly. Ober-Kandalov's gang was returning to the scene of the crime.

And the wolves took to their heels, running faster and faster. They never turned back to look at the great Moyun-Kum steppe: the Moyun-Kum wolves were leaving it forever...



Anatoli RYBAKOV

AND HIS "CHILDREN OF ARBAT"



Anatoli RYBAKOV

Anatoli Rybakov's name is well-known to the Soviet reader. Many generations of Soviet children have enjoyed his *Dirk*, *The Bronze Bird*, *A Shot* and *Krosh's Vacation*—all witty books

with thrilling plots.

But Anatoli Rybakov does not only write for children. Adults enjoyed his earlier novels, *The Drivers* and *Yekaterina Voronina*. As for *Heavy Sand*, published in the late 1970s, it was re-

printed in 23 countries.

In 1987, the *Druzhba Narodov* monthly published his new novel, *The Children of Arbat*, which dwells on the period that has left a deep scar in our society's memory, and the moral climate of the pre-war years. Libraries are still desperately trying to meet their subscribers' demand for this book: hundreds of readers are still on the waiting-list. The writer receives piles of letters from all over the world. Many foreign publishers would like to print *The Children of Arbat* in translation, although it has already been issued in many European languages.

What is the reason for the novel's enormous popularity? What made the writer turn to the harshest time in our history? What lesson have we been taught by the past? I discussed all these issues with Anatoli Rybakov.

Our readers would like to know how you set about writing your novel *The Children of Arbat*. Could you tell us about it?

"It took me twenty years to complete the novel. My idea was to depict one of the most dramatic periods in the life of the Soviet people, which has not as yet been fully examined either in

fiction or in history books. The action of the novel starts in Moscow in 1934. Its heroes are young people on the threshold of adult life. Their destiny reflects that of their country.

"The novel is based mostly on my own impressions and memories of that time. I was 23 then, and, like my heroes, I was at the centre of events. Apart from that, I drew information from Lenin's works and the short-hand records of some of the party congresses. I also learned some valuable facts from actual participants in those events and eyewitnesses, people who used to know Stalin, Kirov, Ordzhonikidze and other statesmen. Newspapers and other periodicals from that period also helped me to reconstruct the course of events."

Does that mean that your novel is autobiographical? Did your heroes have prototypes?

"The memories that leave the deepest scar in one's heart are the strongest. The 1930s left terrible scars in my own heart and that of Soviet people. Indeed, *The Children of Arbat* is an autobiographical novel, to a great extent. Well, aren't all books autobiographical? A writer

will describe himself or his acquaintances even if he writes a book on Caius Julius Caesar... A book is autobiographical if the events in its hero's life coincide with the actual developments under way in his country. From this point of view my novel is certainly autobiographical. I was born and brought up at 51 Arbat Street, where the action begins. That house, a large eight-storey block, is still standing. Now there is a video club on the ground floor...

"All the characters of my novel, apart from the real officials, are fictitious: they are made up of the features of many people I knew. The same is true of the hero, Sasha Pankratov. His life story mostly coincides with mine, but this doesn't mean that I am Sasha. He is quite different from me, and I approve of his behaviour more than I approve of my own."

Have you ever been to Boguchany?

"Yes, I was there in the 1930s, and revisited it in 1967. When I completed the first part and embarked on the second, I went to Boguchany and Kezhma, too."

Stalin is one of the central figures in your novel. Why did you consider it necessary to write about him at such length?

"Well, Stalin was a complex and contradictory figure, and therefore he presented a special interest to me as a writer. I wanted to probe into his character and try to grasp the motives for his behaviour and actions. It is up to the reader to judge if I was successful in this attempt."

Fiction always presupposes fantasy. How much of your novel is invented?

"Of course, I did invent some things. What is essential, is that fictitious details should not contradict history or distort historical characters. Within such limits a writer is free to invent a great deal in order to turn his characters into people made of flesh and blood."

Many reviews of your novel have been published in the press. I'm sure that the readers have written to you, too. What do they think of your book?

"I receive a few dozen letters every day, most of them from young people. The readers understand my book. They write that the truth about their country's history enriches them spiritually and morally. The young readers' response shows their yearning for knowledge and hatred of lies and semi-truths."

Anatoli RYBAKOV

"This type of reaction to my novel from the younger generation is my best reward.

"What is remarkable is that the readers attribute the very fact of my novel's publication to glasnost and perestroika. I agree. It was glasnost that gave the readers access to my novel and many other books. I think we owe it to the Party's determination to tell the people the entire truth about those events which were distorted or hushed up not so long ago."

"What, do you think, is the main condition for instilling faith in ideals?"

"A person brought up on the truth is a highly moral person seeking ethical ideals and moral criteria. He who is brought up on lies or semi-truths is an immoral person. He isn't seeking any moral ideals, he has no use for them. The

same is true about society...

"What is the new mentality? It is a radical change in people's attitudes, thinking and morality. One has to be brought up on the truth to be able to tell the truth. That's why we need glasnost. And that is what glasnost actually is: being brought up on the truth. This is, I think, the main condition for having faith in ideals."

Are you going to write a sequel to your novel?

Some of its characters appear in my new book, entitled *1935 and Other Years*. Those were hard years, full of dramatic events that changed many people's lives, and I've tried hard to write a truthful account of them."

Anatoli RYBAKOV

Ilya OKUNEV

1935 AND OTHER YEARS

(An excerpt)





omrade Alferov," Sasha said, "the term of my exile expired yesterday."

"Did it?" Alferov inquired, assuming a surprised expression. "Did it really?"

"It did," repeated Sasha, "and I've already informed you about it. I was sentenced to three years, including preliminary detention. I was arrested on January 19, 1934, and today is January 19, 1937. Therefore, I'm free as of today. Please give me the relevant papers."

"Which papers do you mean?"

"Well, the papers you usually issue in such cases. I'm sure you know."

"Suppose I give them to you. What are you going to do then?"

"I'll go away."

"Where will you go?"

"Home."

"To Moscow?"

"To Moscow."

"But you are not allowed to go there."

"Why not?"

"Because your case falls under the Resolution on the Passport System issued by the Council of the People's Commissars of the USSR. There are certain cities where you have no right to live, and Moscow is one of them."

"But the Resolution was passed before the new Constitution was adopted."

"The new Constitution," said Alferov, "does not annul other laws and resolutions passed by the Soviet authorities. Some laws, or rather regulations, will be reconsidered and changed, for instance the law on elections and so on. But the laws protecting the proletarian dictatorship will remain valid. Did you read Comrade Stalin's speech on the Constitution?"

"Yes, I did."

"Comrade Stalin said unequivocally: 'The Draft Constitution confirms the regime of the proletarian dictatorship.' What else do you want? By the way, did you notice that the Constitution contains no article on the freedom of movement? That's how it is usually defined in bourgeois constitutions: 'the freedom of movement', that is, a free choice of residence, the right to live where one chooses. We won't allow vagrancy; the limitations imposed by the passport system have not been cancelled, and are hardly likely to be."

He turned away from Sasha and added significantly,

looking out of the window: "On the contrary, I think they will be toughened."

"All right, that's as may be," said Sasha, "but there is a law according to which a person cannot be kept in prison even a day over his sentence. Nobody has cancelled this law."

"Where did you see it?"

"I read it," Sasha lied.

"That's not true, you couldn't have read it because this law is non-existent. Logically speaking, if the convict's term has expired but he is not released, it means that he is being detained groundlessly, that is, an offence is being committed."

"OK, so let me go?"

"I am not detaining you."

"But I can't leave without the papers!"

"Your papers are at the Krasnoyarsk branch of the NKVD. This is thousands of kilometres away, and there are plenty of convicts between here and there. They didn't manage to forward your papers in time to reach here by January 19. They will arrive, don't you worry. But if you don't want to wait, go to the Krasnoyarsk branch of the NKVD and demand them. Though I can't tell you what kind of papers they'll give you."

His last words contained a threat: the papers might confirm that he had served his term, or state that it had been prolonged.

Sasha said nothing.

"So it's up to you to choose," Alferov concluded. "whether you'd better wait for the papers here or go and demand them in Krasnoyarsk."

Sasha was silent for a while, then said: "I must be released today. If I am not, I'll send a telegram to Comrade Kalinin."

Alferov laughed. "Do you think it'll go straight to Kalinin's desk?"

"I don't know. But somebody is bound to answer it."

Alferov squinted. "Did you ever get an answer to your letter to Comrade Stalin?"

So that's it? The letter to Stalin is probably in his desk. That's why he's laughing!

"Do you think you did the right thing by writing to Comrade Stalin?"

"Don't I have the right to apply to him?"

"Of course, you do. Everybody applies to Comrade Stalin. You read the newspapers, so you must know. They write about their achievements and thank him for his help in their

work and for his guidance. Undoubtedly, convicts appeal to him too, and there are many of them, as you certainly know. You appealed to him yourself, after serving half your term. You had never complained or protested, then suddenly—bang!—you wrote that you had been convicted without any legal grounds, and asked him to have you released. Did any new evidence appear in your case, I ask you? Nothing of the kind! You never got an answer, because in order to reply, one should at least have good grounds for reconsidering your case, and there are no such grounds.”

“Well, have it your way,” Sasha said, “but a man has the right to hope, and no one can deprive him of that right.”

Alferov moved his glass aside, put his elbows on the desk and looked at Sasha gravely.

“You’re right: a person has the right to hope. But a person must think twice before he acts—it’s his duty. Did you really think that your letter would reach Comrade Stalin? And that your case would be reconsidered simply because you appealed to Comrade Stalin? No, of course you couldn’t count or pin your hopes on that. You’re too intelligent. You acted on the spur of the moment. By writing a letter to Comrade Stalin you reminded the law enforcement bodies about yourself, for it was, naturally, they who got your letter. Moreover, you accused the authorities of convicting an innocent person. Was that what you wanted?”

Sasha did not reply. What kind of a man was this? A friend? An enemy? He did not beat about the bush: he said that Sasha should not have written to Stalin or annoyed the authorities, or even drawn their attention to himself. Sasha had always known that, but it had not prevented him from writing the letter.

“Maybe, you’re right and I shouldn’t have written,” said Sasha, “but that was a long time ago, and I don’t see why we should discuss it now. As of today, I’m being detained illegally. I think I have the right to complain. I don’t know when you’ll get those papers, or if you’ll receive them at all.”

“Do you think you’d be better off at liberty?”

“Freedom is always better than prison.”

“You’re right: freedom is better than prison.”

Alferov rose to his feet, walked across the room to the chest of drawers, like the last time, and took a carafe full of home-made wine. But he did not pour out a glass for himself, like the other day; he took two wine glasses and put them on the table.

“Well, Alexander Pavlovich, the other day you refused to

drink with me. But I hope you will now. You were an exiled convict the other time, and I was your warder. Now, according to you, you're a free man, which means that you can have a drink. Moreover, I think it's your duty to celebrate such a great day."

He filled both glasses, then he raised his, nodding to Sasha, and drained it.

Sasha emptied his glass, too. The wine tasted slightly bitter, but it was good.

"So," Sasha said, "I've got nowhere to go. It's pointless to stay here and wait for the papers: I can't and won't do that. Give me a pass to Krasnoyarsk, and I'll see law and justice there."

"I couldn't give them to you, and you expect to find them there, eh?" Alferov said, grinning, and pointed at the carafe: "Did you like it?"

"Yes, it's good."

"Have another one."

"Thanks."

Alferov emptied his glass, wiped his lips and waited for Sasha to finish his.

"Can you imagine the consequences of your decision? Suppose you set off for Krasnoyarsk in these wintry conditions. I've no money to pay such long-distance fares, so you'll have to cover all the expenses yourself. Are you sure you can afford it? Well, suppose you get there and turn up at the Krasnoyarsk branch of the NKVD. Aren't they likely to say: 'Why did you come here? Your papers have been mailed to Kezhma: go back and get them from Comrade Alferov! Well? How would you feel about that?'"

Sasha pushed aside his glass and glared at Alferov. That's enough? The bastard's just having a bit of fun!

"Comrade Alferov!"

But the officer interrupted him: "You don't have to be so formal. We've just had a drink together. Call me Viktor Gerasimovich."

But there was no stopping Sasha, and he repeated: "Comrade Alferov! This is a pointless and humiliating conversation. I officially ask you to give me a paper stating that I have served my term, or a formal refusal to do so, indicating the reasons for it."

"Well," Alferov drawled thoughtfully, "you've misunderstood me... It's a pity... But you'll understand me some day."

He went to the adjoining room, which he used as a study,

set down at the desk and began to write. He wrote for a long time, occasionally stopping to consult a file and then resumed his writing. When he had finished, he blotted the paper, rose to his feet and returned to the other room.

"Here you are, then, Alexander Pavlovich," he said, putting an ironical emphasis on Sasha's name and patronimic. "This is the document certifying that your term of exile has expired. In the column 'Destination'," he added, pointing it out, "I wrote 'Keshma'. It means that you'll go straight from here to the police station, and they'll give you a passport in exchange for this certificate. It will be a temporary passport, valid for three or six months. Don't argue: take whatever they offer. And don't ask any questions. As soon as you get the passport, try to get away—today or tomorrow, no later. Tomorrow they'll be sending a mail train to Taishet—try to leave with it. I can't give you any travel allowance because your destination is Keshma. I think you'll manage, and the postman won't charge much. Put your suitcase into the sledge and you walk. I don't think you should go to Moscow. Go to some town with no residence restrictions, swap your temporary passport for a permanent one and go as far away from Moscow as you can. Everybody tries to settle down at the 101st kilometre. Don't do that—there are too many people like you there, and a crowd is the last thing you want. Live on your own. You don't want unnecessary contacts. I don't think you need any contacts at all. You're young, healthy and handsome, and you've grown stale here. It's high time to travel, see Mother Russia and meet the people. In short, try to get my message this time: my advice is only for your own good. I didn't deceive you: your documents haven't arrived from Krasnoyarsk yet. That's exactly why I'm letting you go..."

After a pause he added meaningfully: "That's why I have to hurry you up. Have a good trip!"

He held out his hand and took Sasha's.

"Please remember everything I've told you... Though, of course, we discussed nothing but your articles on history, didn't we?"

"Of course," said Sasha firmly. "We discussed nothing else."

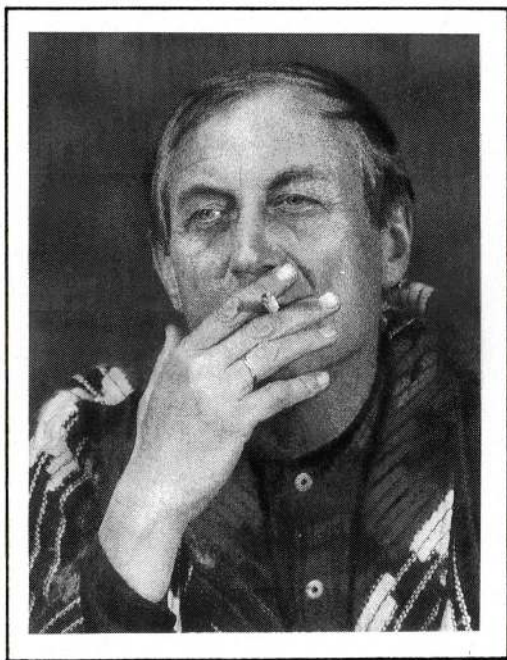
Sasha did not know that a big new trial had started in Moscow two days before with Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Muralov and other prominent Bolsheviks in the dock.

Alferov did know.

That trial started off the year 1937.

Yevgeni YEVTUSHENKO:

***"PERESTROIKA WILL BE
THE WAY WE ARE"***



In one old, faded issue of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, there is a photo that could probably be called historic. It depicts the patriarch of Soviet writers, Nikolai Teleshov, at his villa. The then youngest member of

the USSR Union of Writers, Yevgeni Yevtushenko, little known at the time, stands at his side.

Teleshov died a long time ago, and Yevgeni Yevtushenko has become an author of international

renown. But he is still young at heart: he is easily carried away, unpredictable, fearless of mistakes and always original.

A remarkable poet himself, he is also an expert on poetry. In addition, he has proved to be an excellent prose writer—suffice it to recall his science fiction story *Ardabiola*, novel *These Parts Are Good for Berries* and *Fuku*.

He surprised the public by playing a part in a movie, but this was not enough for him, so he then directed a film, *The Kindergarten*, based on his own script. His photographic exhibition proved him to be a talented photographer. He also admitted that he would like to make his own screen version of *The Three Musketeers* and play the part of D'Artagnan in it. Not long ago the public was captivated by his articles *Mass Scepticism Is not as Destructive as Mass Optimism* and *Growing Stale*, both dealing with perestroika and its prospects.

He was born in the town of Zima, Irkutsk Region, in 1933. His first verses were published in 1949. "Yevgeni Yevtushenko's literary career," wrote critic Vladimir Barlas in 1960, "is quite sensational. The

reviews published after the poet's public appearances remind me of a prelude to a scandal just about to break out: 'But the Emperor has nothing at all on!', 'Isn't it time he grew up?', 'It's shameful to show off like that!', etc. But the angry attacks usually end in admitting his undisputable talents. Isn't this the best advertisement for a non-conformist like him?"

The young are always self-assured, but it passes with time. Like many other poets, Yevtushenko is an artist. He likes himself the way he was in the distant and not so distant past, and he approves of the way he is today. He is always sincere, even when he is showing off. It is his sincerity that makes up for everything erroneous and superficial in him.

His talents blossomed in the 1950s, when our society was on the spiritual rise after the 20th Party Congress. Ever since, the poet Yevgeni Yevtushenko has been supporting glasnost, perestroika and justice at every level.

He always had clashes with literary chiefs, and he still has them. Instead of condemning Vladimir Dudintsev's book *Not by Bread Alone* like everybody else, he praised it and was expelled from the Literary Institute. The

press launched a campaign against him, accusing the poet of being a kind of Soviet playboy concerned only with his own affairs and success. However, he was thinking of his country, the people around him and his own place in life. Incidentally, he is the author of the famous lines: "A poet in Russia is far more than a poet."

Among his best-known poems are *Do Russian People Stand For War?*, *The Station Zima*, *The Pushkin Rampart*, *Corrida*, *Under the Skin of the Statue of Liberty*, *Snow in Tokyo* and *A Dove in Santiago*. None of Yevtushenko's books have ever been stuck on the shop shelves for long.

His poem *Mom and the Neutron Bomb* written in 1982 made quite a stir. It has everything—high poetry, musical rhythm and political topicality. The poet's love for his mother merges with his love for his homeland, opposing the bomb-makers' madness. In this poem satire is alternated with fantasy, fantasy gives way to pathos, and pathos to simple, emotional phrases. The lines "Christians with bombs are not Christians! Those who kill people, kill Jesus Christ!" are truly shattering.

The poem ends with a symbolical picture: the poet's mother (who has

retired and is now running a news stall) "is selling the day-after-tomorrow's papers, declaring that as of today war has been banished for good".

The poem won its author a USSR State Prize.

Yevgeni Yevtushenko's articles, usually published by *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Sovetskaya Kultura* (Soviet Culture), always make a stir and bring in a flood of readers' letters.

"In Russia," wrote Yevtushenko, "glasnost always began with writers, and by shutting them up, the powers-that-be would shut the workers' and peasants' mouths, for literature is their voice."

"The reconstruction of the historical truth," claims the poet, "is also the reconstruction of the people's morality."

In another article he wrote: "Perestroika will be the way we are. If we are only half-decided, it will be a semi-perestroika. If we build a new society with rotten planks from the camps, perestroika is sure to fail. If each of us pulls the blanket over himself, perestroika will freeze."

He is confident of perestroika's ultimate victory, and he is doing his utmost to promote it.

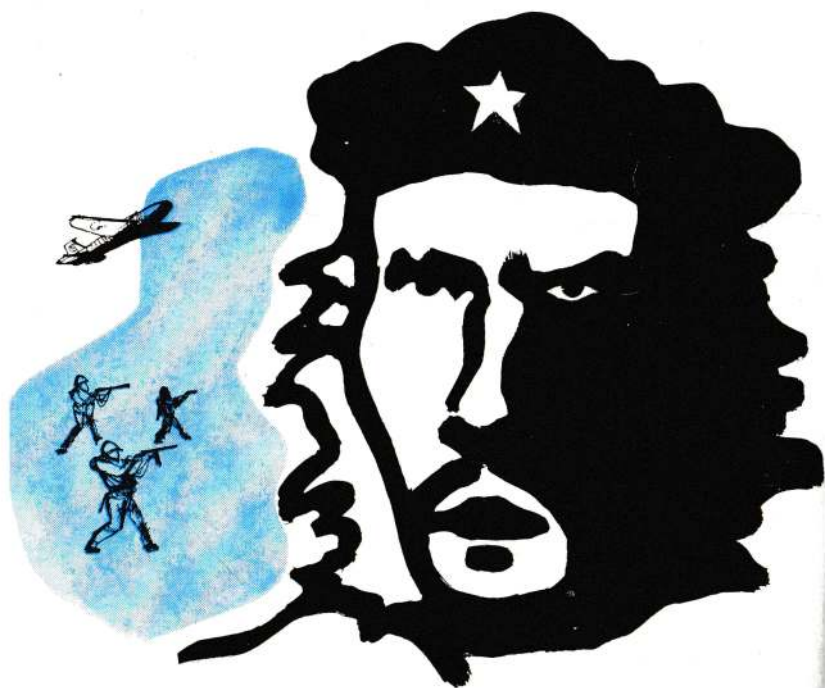
Gavriil PETROSIAN

Yevgeni YEVTUSHENKO

Yevgeni YEVTUSHENKO

FUKU

(An excerpt)



”W

hy did I become a revolutionary?

Commandante Che said, repeating my question and looking at me from under his brow, as if wondering whether I had asked it out of curiosity or wanted him to answer in earnest.

I involuntarily looked away—I was really frightened. Not for myself—for him. He was one of those whom Alexander Blok described as having “doomed eyes”.

Commandante Che swung round on the heels of his heavy army boots, which seemed to be covered with the old dust of Sierra Maestra, and walked up to the window. A large, mournful butterfly looking like a shuddering patch of Havana night, landed on the glittering star of his beret, shoved under the shoulderstrap of his olive-coloured shirt.

“I wanted to be a medic, but realized that medicine alone could not save humanity,” he replied slowly, without turning.

Then he turned round sharply, and I looked away again, avoiding his eyes; they were bitterly cold, as if they no longer belonged to this world. The dark circles under the Commandante’s eyes, caused by sleepless nights, looked scorched.

“Can you ride a bike?” he asked me.

I looked up, expecting him to be smiling, but his pale face was serious.

“Sometimes a bike can help you to become a revolutionary,” said the Commandante, sitting down and carefully picking up a cup of coffee with his slim pianist’s fingers. “In my teens I decided to cycle around the world. Once I stowed away on board a huge cargo plane bound for Miami, with my bike. The plane was to deliver horses to a race course. I hid my bike and then hid myself. When we arrived, the horse-owners were furious. They were terrified by the thought that my presence might have upset the animals’ nervous systems. They decided to teach me a lesson and locked me inside the plane. It was stifling hot there. I was suffocating and delirious from the heat and hunger... Would you like another cup of coffee! I chewed hay and got sick. The horse-owners returned the next day, drunk. I think they had lost their bets, too. One of them threw a half-empty bottle of Coca-Cola at me, and the bottle smashed. One of the fragments contained some liquid. I drank it and cut my lips. On our way back the horse-owners drank whisky and taunted me with their sandwiches. Fortunately, they gave their horses

some water, and I drank it out of a canvas pail together with the animals..."

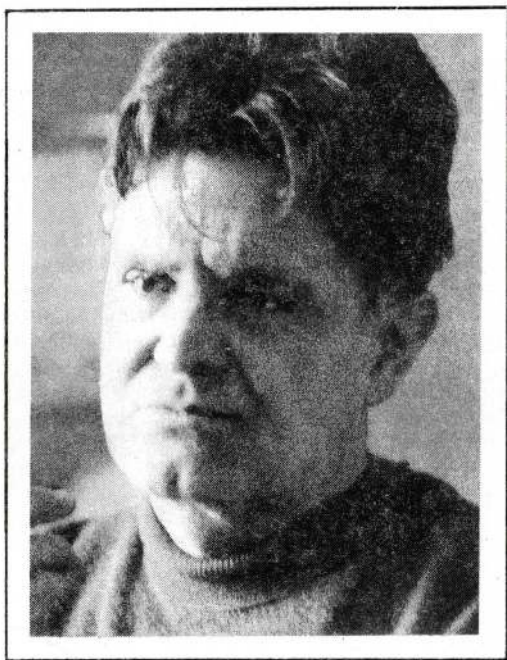
This conversation took place in 1963, when the Commandante's tragic face, framed with a beard, was not yet printed on T-shirts to satisfy the left-wing youth's anti-imperialist craze. The Commandante sat next to me, drinking coffee, talking and tapping his fingers on a book on the history of the guerrilla war in China, whose presence on his desk was probably not accidental. He had become a living legend before the events in Bolivia, and any living legend bears the stamp of death. He was looking for it. According to one of the legends, the Commandante and a handful of his men unexpectedly flew to Vietnam and offered Ho Chi Minh their services, but the latter turned them down politely. The Commandante continued seeking death as he fought his way through the Bolivian selva, with mosquitoes swarming all over him, while the starving people for whose sake he was fighting betrayed him; he was followed by a death squad, killing everybody who dared give him refuge. Death entered the country school of La Igüera, where he sat at the teacher's table, tired and ill, and it barked "Get up!" in an army voice, anticipating an award. But he did not get up—he only swore. It didn't occur to him to obey the command. They say that when the bullets riddled him he was smiling, for he probably welcomed death. They chopped off his musical fingers and flew them to La Paz for fingerprint identification, and his body, cut into pieces, was scattered all over the selva, to deprive him of a grave where people would come to mourn him. But if he smiled, dying, it was perhaps because he thought that only through death can people achieve what they were unable to achieve in their lifetimes. Maybe, there would have been no Christianity if Jesus Christ had died in his bed, retired.

And now, holding a cup of coffee in his as yet unchopped-off fingers and glaring at me with his eyes that had not as yet been put out, the Commandante said: "It's hunger that turns you into a revolutionary; either your own or other people's, when it feels like your own..."



Fazil ISKANDER

—*LORD OF CHEGEM*



Fazil ISKANDER

The Moscow street where writer Fazil Iskander lives looks like a canyon: its multi-storey buildings stand so close together that the rare Moscow sun rays only penetrate into the concrete well for an hour or two. Such a place of residence seems rather gloomy for the man who

created the sunny land of Chegem and populated it with optimistic, wise and at the same time naive people. The writer himself also proved to be very different from the mischievous, cheerful man I had created in my imagination.

They say that the first impression is always the

true. My first
 session of Fazil
 under was that of an
 exceptionally serious,
 wise and
 philosophically-minded
 person. His perfect
 Persian speech is slow,
 he seems to weigh
 every word. This is
 most unusual for a
 southerner: Iskander is of
 mixed Persian and
 Abkhasian descent.
 "This is quite natural,"
 says the writer. "I was
 born and bred in
 Abkhumi, a little Babylon
 populated with numerous
 ethnic groups—
 Abkhassians, Georgians,
 Greeks, Russians,
 Armenians, Jews, Turks,
 so on. All those
 multi-lingual people are
 united by a common
 language, Russian. That is
 why I've been speaking
 Russian and Abkhasian
 equally fluently since I
 was a little boy. It was
 through Russian culture
 that I came to know
 world culture..."
 The 1930s were a tragic
 period for our country—a
 time of atrocious purges
 that affected many Soviet
 people. The Iskanders
 were no exception. In
 1938, when the future
 writer was only nine, his
 father was banished to
 Siberia together with many
 other Persians. His
 mother's two brothers were
 arrested and thrown into
 jail.
 It is amazing how

immune children are to
 misfortunes. Fazil was no
 exception: he grew up
 and matured just like any
 other boy. I think he
 owed it to his mother's
 large family headed by his
 grandfather. The family
 lived in the village of
 Chegem, situated high up
 in the mountains, where
 Fazil spent his summer
 vacations. It was there, in
 Chegem, that he became
 aware of many eternal
 truths.

Not long ago Iskander's
 novel *Sandro of Chegem*
 was published in the
 USA. Its title page
 contains a picture of the
 writer and a map of
 Abkhazia. The caption
 reads: "Lord of Chegem".
 The US publishers made
 no mistake in giving
 Iskander such a high title.
 The land of Chegem
 described in his books
 lives according to the
 writer's own laws.

Sandro of Chegem is a
 sequence of heroic,
 funny, sad, tragic and
 mischievous stories from
 Abkhazian peasants' life.
 Their main character is
 Uncle Sandro, who
 reminds one both of Don
 Quixote and Sancho
 Pansa.

"What accounts for a
 book's success or
 failure?" Iskander
 repeated my question.
 "You see, a writer is set in
 motion by what I call a
 misleading energy.
 Indeed, how can one

seriously believe that one's book can reform humanity and deliver it from suffering and grief? Yet, if one is not misled, one cannot possibly write anything decent.

"When I was writing *Sandro of Chegem*, I subconsciously set myself two tasks. First, it seems to me that the world today is split up. Too many people tend to believe that good and evil are relative, and this thought makes them suffer. That was why I set out to write a book depicting an integral, patriarchal world, in which good ultimately triumphs. Second, I find the modern world too depressed: it lacks smiles and laughter. That was why I resorted to humour: I wanted to help people regain their optimism and harmonize their relationships."

In my opinion, the quest for harmony is the main theme in all Iskander's books.

"I was the laziest boy at my school in Sukhumi," Iskander said, smiling. "Sometimes, sitting at my desk with my head on my arms, I would doze off without losing track of the teacher's explanations. It was only much later that I learned that the same technique, hypnopaedia, is used to teach foreign languages. I hope I won't

sound too immodest if I say that I was the first to make the discovery..."

No matter what, he graduated from school with honours. Naturally, he wanted to continue his education. As all the best colleges were in the capital, Fazil went to Moscow and got enrolled at the Moscow Institute of Librarians. Soon it occurred to him that he would rather write his own books than classify other people's and he was transferred to the Literary Institute, from which he graduated in the early 1950s.

I am afraid that after a sunny, multi-lingual city like Sukhumi, Iskander found Moscow rather gloomy. He probably had few regrets about leaving it when he got his diploma and was posted to a newspaper in Bryansk, a city in Central Russia.

By that time some of his verses had been published in Moscow journals, and this nipped his promising newspaper career in the bud. The problem was that he thought he had the right to criticize his editor's verses. As for the editor, he decided that his newspaper was too small for two poets, so he did his best to get rid of one of them.

But that sad incident (which was repeated in

other papers for which Iskander worked) induced the young poet, walking on air, to have a closer look at people and some of the features of social life.

Obviously, his story *The Constellation of Goat-auroch* (1966) was a result of his observations. Its murderous satire made the reader roar with laughter. In a nutshell, its plot is as follows. Several learned men had the absurd idea of crossing a domestic goat with a wild auroch to obtain a unique hybrid, a goat-auroch, and thus promote the country's animal farming to the top international level. All the mass media ardently publicized the project, and it was even backed by top executive bodies. Enormous funds were allocated for the purpose. New celebrities linked with the project sprang up like mushrooms. When the original idea was finally proved silly, it was no longer possible to find the culprits...

Starting from *The Constellation of Goat-auroch*, satire—which Iskander defines as intelligence's laughter at folly—has formed an inalienable part of his books. The story itself became a bestseller that brought the author national renown and turned him into one of the

country's best prose-writers. Yet, there was a reverse side to his popularity: the upper literary echelons grew apprehensive and labelled him as dangerous for the Establishment. Some even decided that *The Constellation of Goat-auroch* mocked Soviet biology.

The story of Iskander's misfortunes is long and heart-rending. Many of his works were shelved, and it took him a lot of trouble to get others published. Iskander feels bitter about it. No wonder: one can imagine what a writer must feel when his books are confined to his desk drawers for decades.

This also refers to his philosophical parable, the novel *Boa Constrictors and Rabbits*, written some fifteen years ago and published only in 1987. In this novel Iskander studies the character of a closed, totalitarian society.

The novel is a parable showing humans in animal disguise. The boa constrictors hypnotize and devour the rabbits, who resign themselves humbly to their fate. One of the rabbits reflects upon the nature of his race's humbleness and decides to wage war on the boa constrictors. The questions arise as to whether his struggle is

necessary, how it will end and whether it is possible to help the rabbits. The author attempts to answer these questions in his novel.

Says Fazil Iskander: "I often think over the problem of the individual and the crowd. Everybody knows that in other people's company one feels more courageous and free than one actually is. We also know that amidst a panic-stricken crowd one is overwhelmed with a crazy, unconscious fear, which urges him to do the most stupid and preposterous things. What becomes of his true ego at such a time? Isn't it disgraceful to be more cowardly or, on the other hand, more courageous than one actually is, at other people's expense? Where is our true ego and how can we protect it?" I think these words help to get his ideas across.

Lately many of Iskander's works have been published by literary monthlies. For example, *Znamya*, *Novy Mir*, *Druzhba Narodov* and *Yunost* have printed his stories, among them *Team Leader Kyazym*, *Chik Knew Where the Dog Was Buried* and *Taboo*. In 1987, two of his new books, *The Festival in Anticipation of a Festival* and *A Great Day in a Big House*, were published in

Moscow and Sukhumi. The same year another book of his was brought out, entitled *The Old House under the Cypresses*. It is an account of life in a big southern city, narrated by a little boy, which makes it especially fresh and pure.

The Old House under the Cypresses is the sequel to a collection of short stories about a little boy called Chik. According to the author, it is an attempt to create the character of a thinking Tom Sawyer. Unlike Mark Twain's easy-going little hero, Iskander's Chik, though still a child, often reflects on such serious categories as evil, good and eternity.

Fazil Iskander's books have been translated into many languages and have been published in nearly all the socialist countries, as well as in Britain, France, Spain, the USA, Turkey and Sweden. Some of his stories are on the syllabus of several US colleges.

I asked the writer where he took the material for his stories. He said he used his own imagination. However, by the end of our four-hour talk it suddenly dawned on me that I had told him all about myself, plus a few things about my parents and grandparents.

Well, I thought to myself, if I had such an amazing ability to find out everything about people, I would have also become a writer.

I asked him to describe his artistic method, to which he replied jokingly that he usually made mountains out of molehills, provided

the molehills were solid enough.

"But seriously..." I pleaded.

"Well, I take a certain fact of life, place it into a saturated solution of imagination and wait until it crystallizes into a fact of culture."

Vladimir RYNDIN

Fazil ISKANDER

OH, MARAT!

(An excerpt)





ntil Fate raises its punitive hand against a man, he is safe even in the most dangerous predicament.

Here are a few incidents from Marat's life, which confirm this eternal truth. The first one took place of Marat's own free will.

When he left school, Marat went to Moscow, confident that he would be enrolled at the cameramen's department of the film institute. He had always been fond of photography, and the entrance regulations required that every applicant should submit a few photographs.

Marat was sure they would enroll him only to get hold of his photos—so convinced he was of their immediate success. Alas! The competition proved to be too tough for him, and his photos and papers were returned to him with insulting indifference.

What could he do? His exam results were high enough to get him into another institute, that of dairy farming, which was of no interest to Marat whatsoever. But he applied automatically and was enrolled. Both the line of the institute and its name made him suffer. Girls would giggle each time he mentioned it, and easily break through the veil of romantic hypnosis he had enveloped them in.

After two years at the institute Marat was struck by a simple and ingenious idea. He decided to appeal to Comrade Beria as a fellow countryman (Beria really was our fellow countryman) to transfer him from the dairy institute to the film school. Marat rightly assumed that Beria had enough influence and authority to do so.

Being a man of action, Marat decided to put his dream into practice without delay. He was convinced that his plan would work out if only he could arrange a meeting with Beria. He decided that the annual countrymen's dinner, held at the Aragvi restaurant, would give him a brilliant opportunity to meet the omnipotent minister. He did not want Beria to think him selfish, so he decided to ask him not only to transfer him to the film institute but also to attend his countrymen's convention.

Beria had been pointed out to Marat in Sadovoye Koltso on several occasions, so he knew where to go. He was lucky. Half a block away he saw Lavrenti Pavlovich strolling near his mansion, with two colonels guarding him on both sides.

Marat fearlessly headed for Beria's walking-grounds.

"What do you want here?" demanded one of the colonels, stopping Marat near the guarded zone.

"I have a request for Comrade Beria," said Marat and then, correcting himself, "or, rather, two requests for him as a fellow countryman."

"What do you mean?" inquired the colonel.

"I'm a fellow countryman of Lavrenti Pavlovich," said Marat. "I study at the dairy farming institute, but I would like to ask for a transfer to the film institute."

Incidentally, the photographs rejected by the latter were in his pocket, in case Comrade Beria wanted to have a look...

"Comrade Beria doesn't concern himself with such trifles," the colonel replied coldly but without hostility.

At that moment Lavrenti Pavlovich came up to them.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Marat felt he could not possibly repeat his first request, so he decided to start with the second one.

"Lavrenti Pavlovich," Marat began, "Your countrymen, Transcaucasian students, would like to invite you to a friendly dinner at the Aragvi at 8 p.m. tomorrow."

Lavrenti Pavlovich and the colonel exchanged glances.

"All right," said Beria, "I'll come if my guards let me."

Inspired by the meeting and Beria's consent, Marat returned to his hostel. He decided that on the next day, at the Aragvi, he would find a suitable moment to ask Beria to transfer him to the film institute.

Regrettably, Beria's guards did not let him attend the dinner at the Aragvi, so Marat had to give up his dairy college and go back home to Mukhus.

He did not dare bother Beria again, for everybody who heard about his encounter with the man said he must thank God that he had come out of the meeting so well.

...Marat had been working on the local promenade for some time when, one fine autumn day, he noticed a lovely young lady strolling along the embankment.

Marat could not understand why none of the local dandies tried to pick her up. Choosing a suitable moment, when the young lady was approaching his photography stand, he pointed at it, offering to take her picture.

Great was his surprise when she smiled and came nearer. Marat asked her to pose for him, and took several photos. Apparently, he made quite an impression on her, and she said she would come back to pick up the prints. But she warned

him not to take any notice of her or to address her if she was not alone.

For the next two days Marat saw her escorted, as he put it, by two tall, blond, blue-eyed men, so he pretended he had never set eyes on the lady. She reappeared quite unexpectedly, and Marat presented her with the photos, which she liked very much.

He took a few more photos and asked her to pose for him on the beach. She said it was absolutely out of question, because she had an influential boy-friend who should not even guess about their innocent meetings.

Marat said he was not afraid of any VIP boy-friends and that the main thing was that she liked him, Marat. She said Marat was a very courageous man, but she did not want him to take risks.

"Madam," said Marat, trying to show her his energetic profile at every opportunity, "I'm the Napoleon of love!"

"Oh!" said the lovely stranger and smiled meaningfully.

A few days later Marat persuaded her to take a boat ride. At last she agreed, but said that he should board the vessel on the wharf alone, and pick her up at an appointed place on the beach. That was exactly what he did.

At sea, far away from the shore, she came to life and, unable to resist Marat's tender and passionate advances, allowed him to take more liberties than he had expected. Yet, the best was yet to come. She said that her boy-friend would soon be leaving for Sochi, and then they would be able to spend more time together. She gave him her address and made him swear he would not try to see her without her permission. She said her boy-friend only visited her occasionally, but surrounded her with his spies, who should not even guess about her meetings with Marat.

Being of a romantic disposition himself, Marat was sure she was exaggerating. He believed in the existence of her boy-friend and thought he was a local underground millionaire. Marat knew such men to be dangerous enough, and whether she was exaggerating or not, he admitted the necessity of all those precautions.

At long last the great day came. Getting rid of her tall, blond, blue-eyed escorts for a few seconds, the young lady ran up to Marat's stand and whispered to him that she would expect him at her place at 10 p.m.,

Time dragged on, and Marat was in turmoil. It seemed to him that all the city clocks had stopped specifically to make him suffer. He went to the botanical gardens where an agronomist friend of his who worked there helped him get a gorgeous bouquet of red, purple, yellow and white roses, which he took home and put into a bucket of water.

At night Marat found the lady's house in an old street situated in the Upper Town. Squeezing his hand through the iron bars of the gate, he pulled at the latch, entered a small courtyard and walked up some steps whose handrails were concealed by wisteria. One more step, and he reached an open veranda and knocked on the door.

The lovely stranger opened the door, and he presented her with the bouquet, in which she immediately buried her pretty face. Behind her Marat could see a tastefully laid table with supper for two. The sight of this inspired his passionate heart so much that he started hugging and kissing his lovely stranger like mad.

With a great effort she persuaded him to pull himself together, for they had the whole night ahead. Marat came to his senses after a while. The bouquet was divided in two: one part decorated the supper table, and the other was placed in the adjoining room, by the bed, which was wide enough for the wildest love play.

Their romantic supper with Khvanchkara wine was in full swing when his lovely stranger grew pale and mumbled: "Hush! I think I heard a car pulling up..."

At that moment they both heard the iron gate creak.

"Go to the bedroom and stay there," she whispered and pushed him towards the bedroom door.

Marat heard someone knocking at the door.

"Who's there?" asked the lady of the house.

She received an answer, but Marat could not hear it.

"Tell him I'm not well," said the young lady.

A reply followed, but again Marat could not distinguish it. He was dying to know who it was. He suspected that it was a man working for one of the underground millionaires who had knocked on the door, but he did not know which one.

"No, I don't want a doctor," said the lady, and added shyly: "It's the usual female problem."

Marat did not hear the rest. He saw a door leading to another room, opened it and went out. Then he saw one more

door which turned out to lead onto the veranda—the part of the opening onto another staircase, which led to a green courtyard.

Marat ran down the stairs and hid himself under the veranda, its floor looming over his head. Suddenly he heard the tread of a man climbing up the steps. The man halted, then moved forward again and stopped. It occurred to Marat that the man was pausing to look through the brightly lit bedroom windows. It gave him the creeps to think that he could easily have been found in the bedroom, where the young lady had told him to stay.

But in spite of that, Marat was consumed with curiosity. Moving under the veranda, he emerged from the opposite side of the house and looked out from under the wisteria, which grew especially abundantly near the front door.

In the dim light of a street lamp Marat saw the energetic (far more so than his own) profile of a man in a pince-nez sitting in the front seat of a ZIS car. Marat could not help recognizing him, though it was as long as two years since he had seen him.

Marat heard the man who had talked to the lady of the house moving over his head. He came down the stairs, went up to the car and said something to Beria, shielding him from Marat for an instant. After a while he climbed into the car, and it silently glided past the house.

Half-dead from fright, Marat walked up the back stairs and entered the house. He did not like it at all. When he walked into the room where he had been dining with the lovely lady, she threw herself onto his chest and, choking with laughter, tried to tell him something, but Marat could not see any reason for her mirth or share it.

“When he was walking along the veranda,” she said at last, “I was ready for the worst... When I came into the bedroom and realized you weren’t there, I went into the next room, but that was empty, too... I decided he had annihilated you with his glance, when you suddenly walked in with a sour look on your face.”

But Marat was too scared. He knew he could stand up to a local millionaire, but it would be too awful to be Beria’s rival. Their attempt to continue supper was futile, but what was even worse, was that his attempt to make love was even more pathetic. Marat’s body was incapacitated by some leaden melancholy: the profile of the country’s first security man constantly stood before his eyes.

He tried to get into the mood he had been in when kissing her on the boat, but it was no use. The energetic profile of the man in the pince-nez kept appearing before his eyes. The lovely lady made some strong Turkish coffee which she said would rouse him, but he did not feel any better even after two cups. A vague, wandering smile never left his face, and his faked excitement led to nothing.

"Didn't you say you were the Napoleon of love?" the fair lady reproached him at last.

"Madam," Marat replied softly, the wandering smile never leaving his face, "every Napoleon has his Waterloo..."



The Union of Soviet Writers

The Union was set up in 1934. Its present membership exceeds 10,000.

The Union is made up of 15 Writers' Unions from all the constituent republics, 20 Unions from autonomous republics and a number of writers' organizations from autonomous regions, territories and big cities. Its members represent 88 ethnic groups.

The supreme body of the Union is a national congress, held once in five years. The Board and Secretariat, which are elected by the congress, take care of all current work in between the congresses. New members are admitted by the Presidium or Secretariat of a constituent republic's Union, according to the Board Rules. They are admitted by secret ballot, and the new member receives a standard membership card of the Union of Soviet Writers.

The national Union publishes 16 newspapers in 15 languages of the USSR, as well as over 120 literary jour-

nals in the USSR's and other countries' languages. *Sovetsky Pisatel* (Soviet Writer), the Union's main publishing house, annually brings out over 500 book titles, their total edition exceeding 25 million copies. Over 30 per cent of the books are translated from the ethnic languages of the USSR. The republics' organizations of the Union of Soviet Writers run publishing houses of their own.

The Union of Soviet Writers sponsors the Literary Fund of the USSR, which takes care of writers. This is a large organization with substantial funds, a social services sector, medical, industrial and other facilities of its own, which enables it to provide efficient services for writers and their families. Its funds are made up of regular contributions from publishers, editorial boards, theatres, etc., as well as part of the Literary Fund establishments' profits and other sources.

The 1989 Moscow International Book Fair

An Interview with Nikolai YEFIMOV, Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Publishing, Printing and Bookselling

In what way do you think the Seventh Moscow Book Fair differs from all the previous ones?

The main difference that stands out immediately is its name. It used to be called the Moscow International Book Exhibition Fair, but now the word "exhibition" has disappeared. Actually, an exhibition implies a demonstration of achievements. Now that the very approach to publishing in this country has changed radically, and democratic developments are under way in all spheres of our life, we have decided to turn our book fairs into purely commercial events, which is probably what they should have been from the very start.

In 1989 we displayed only editions published over the two years since the previous fair, and only those of them which could be of interest to our partners. The only exception was a small number of

editions brought out four to five years ago, but those were mainly books which our foreign partners failed to appreciate immediately and which they now find interesting.

In short, we placed the main emphasis on the commercial aspect of the event.

The fair was marked by some unprecedented events. For instance, it was the first chance for the Moscow Patriarchate's publishers to display their works on a stand attended by a monk clad in black. Modest as their display was, the Ostromirov Gospel, the gem of the collection, attracted everybody's attention. The facsimile edition of the 11th-century Gospel was published to commemorate the millennium of the Baptism of Rus.

This was also the first chance for authors who had printed their books at their own expense to display them

in public. There were over 200 of them, published in Moscow, Vilnius, Rostov, Yaroslavl and other cities. Some of them had sponsors, particularly the Butovo Building Materials Plant.

But I'm sure that the previous six fairs were not a waste of time—they have made a positive contribution to the progress of our publishing and book trade. Which of their traditions do you think are worth maintaining?

From September 1977, when the first fair was held, we have made a point of studying the experience of our foreign partners, their book design and printing technologies. We have also followed the development of various trends in book publishing, and changes occurring in the readers' demand. In this respect the importance of the previous fairs can hardly be overestimated. They have had a significant effect on the development of publishing business in this country.

We maintain productive contacts with many of our foreign colleagues from socialist, capitalist and developing countries. This fair was attended by such major international corporations as Baker and Taylor International, the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, Broadman/Holman, the Plenum Publishing Company

Ltd., USA, Maxwell Macmillan-Pergamon, the Longman Group, the Scottish Publishers Association and many other publishers from 64 countries. Not to mention 12 major international organizations, such as the United Nations, UNESCO, CMEA, ILO, IOJ, Universal Postal Union, etc.

What are the top priorities in the Soviet Union's publishing policy?

Children's books, fiction, history books, particularly the history of philosophy, as well as law editions, directories and encyclopaedias.

Why did you put children's books in the first place?

We must make them accessible to all, and I don't mean only in terms of the price—their prices are quite reasonable. Our main task is to turn out larger editions. Indeed, if a kid of 4 to 6 does not take to reading, he won't even look at a book at the age of 15, falling into the state of "secondary illiteracy", so to speak.

Detskaya Literatura and Malysh Publishers produce very good books indeed, and we have a whole generation of mature book designers, sought after by foreign publishers. The problem is lack of paper and inadequate printing facilities causing a shortage of books. The manager of Detskaya Literatura once

joked sadly: "Considering the demand, we do not turn out books, but sample copies. Though their minimum editions are never below 100,000 copies."

Which Soviet editions were in highest demand with foreign companies?

I'd say, those in science and engineering. We displayed quite a number of interesting books, many of them unique, representing our new scientific and technological ideas. Besides, foreign publishers—including British, Korean and Indian—showed a great interest in our children's books. Foreign publishers also greatly appreciated our art books.

The fact that documentary and journalistic writing is now more popular in the Soviet Union than fiction certainly told upon the fair as well. Does this mean that fewer contracts were signed at the 1989 Fair on fiction?

Of course not! I would say that the interest in fiction was traditionally high, though I can't name any titles. The thing is that contracts on fiction are usually signed as soon as a particular book is brought out—publishers don't wait for book fairs. Many more contracts were signed over the nine months preceding the fair.

Yet, international publishers believe the readers' de-

mand for fiction is dropping: nowadays people in the West prefer information books to novels. This is not so in the Soviet Union. We publish both national and foreign fiction in editions which are enormous by Western standards. I can explain this by the fact that advanced capitalist countries have recently set up an extensive network of public libraries which are easily accessible to the public. Readers, therefore, buy mostly directories, specialized literature and art books. As for this country, our readers tend to build up domestic libraries, consisting mostly of fiction.

Readers look forward to every book fair because they give them the opportunity to learn more about literature from other countries. Do you think their expectations are justified?

See for yourself: the USSR Copyright Agency (VAAP) acted as a mediator in the signing of 785 contracts, including 532 on exports and 253 on imports. This means that readers will be able to familiarize themselves with hundreds of newly-translated books in science, the humanities, engineering, medicine and the arts, as well as with fiction and children's books.

*Interviewed by
Natalia KARDASHENKO,
APN reporter*

Anniversaries in 1989

It would be wrong to say that Andrei Platonov has been *returned* to the Soviet reader—still enigmatic for many, he has been revived in a new quality, and will, I hope, become immortal. In 1989 his books were read and re-read, widely discussed and heatedly debated by the public, who wanted to understand him, or, rather themselves through him. The 90th anniversary of the writer's birth gave us a chance to reflect upon the destinies of books and their role in our contemporary life.

In his short essay on a new Soviet selection of Platonov's works Andrei Bitov expressed some ideas now shared by many:

"For some (not many) of his contemporaries, Platonov was an 'unorthodox' writer and the author of *Epiphan Locks*. For us in the last 30 years of his revival, he has graduated from unorthodox

to highly original, and from incomparable to unique. After the publication of *Foundation Pit* and *Chevengur* we realized that his originality was, in fact, of a universal character, and his greatness that of a genius.

"It suddenly turned out that what had seemed to be a great but somewhat particular phenomenon, fully expressed our 20th-century history. It seems to me we should always turn to it if we want to find out what has, in fact, happened to us."

Indeed, what has happened to us? Many writers have reflected upon this subject, including Vladimir Vasiliev, a critic whose essay, "Reason and Revolutionary Spirit", was published by the weekly *Literaturnaya Rossiya* on September 1, 1989.

The people and the new intellectuals are reflected in Andrei Platonov's prose and in modern literary debates.

"Reason and Revolutionary Spirit"

Andrei Platonov's recently published works—*Chevengur*, *Foundation Pit* and *Juvenile*

Sea—are often mentioned among other modern stories and novels on the 20s and the

period of collectivization. Therefore, together with our contemporary fiction, they take an active part in developing the readers' concept of the country's mid-20th-century history, and help to answer the question as to what is to be done, and who is to blame for the tragedies of the recent past and for the present disastrous state of our public economy?

Bureaucrats traditionally pointed the finger at the very last person at the bottom. Indeed, any written order, issued at the top and passed down from one level to another, finally got into the hands of a person who had nowhere to pass it, and who therefore had to roll up his sleeves and carry out the instructions listed there. This person is a commoner, or a representative of the so-called masses, the last stratum of the social pyramid.

It seems to me that some of our modern authors also indulge in the old habit of looking for the man at the bottom, to whom they can habitually toss their ideas without endangering their well-being. Busily criticizing and denouncing the cults of Stalin and other "leaders", they claim that this social phenomenon stemmed from the people's love of their "leaders", the peasantry's attachment to slavery, humbleness and hu-

mility, along with its monarchism, worship of strong authority, and inability and refusal to live democratically. All that, they claim, is rooted in the people's national narrow-mindedness, lack of European finesse, etc.

All this is certainly worth thinking about. If our people are really like the masses depicted by the authors of *The Children of Arbat* (Anatoli Rybakov) and *Rise and Go* (Yuri Nagibin), we are bound to draw the conclusion that the October Revolution was not democratic.

Actually, the issue of the people's revolutionary spirit is a stumbling-block in modern fiction. Even such an expert on Russia and the Russians as Fyodor Abramov stumbled over it painfully in his letter to his countrymen, "How We Live and What We Eat". Platonov was also keen on this issue throughout his life. In his mature years he interpreted the people's revolutionary spirit in a somewhat different way from, say, Maxim Gorky in 1917-1918 (*Untimely Ideas*) and even from some modern authors. Refuting Gorky's idea that "the scientific, technical—basically well-educated intelligentsia... is revolutionary in its very essence", Platonov rightly pointed out that "such a 'mechanical' revolutionary spirit is non-existent, and in

this particular case... it is the people who have an advantage over the intellectuals from the point of view of both reason and revolutionary spirit."

What I find strange, is that it is the British engineer Bertrand Perry who looks dumb compared to the village women, and who eventually suffers a fiasco in the finale of *Epiphan Locks*. Or another example: is it not a very learned man, sitting at the top of a high mountain and thinking about global projects aimed at improving life on earth, who utterly ignores the sufferings of the honest Makar at the mountain foot, in the story *Doubting Makar*? Is it not according to engineer Prushevsky's project that a proletarian home is built for a happy mankind of the future in *Foundation Pit*?

Platonov, a self-taught man who read Kant, Schelling and who was well familiar with Russian philosophy (Nikolai Fyodorov, Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev and others), had a realistic outlook on culture and intellectuals—the present exalted, "adoring" attitude towards them, so zealously imposed on our contemporaries by our new mass media, was alien to him. The author of *Chevengur* realized that, apart from unquestionable humanitarian values, culture and intellect contain a concealed,

apparently harmless and attractive poison, which is detrimental to man's health, and "cunningly" used "to suppress people, rather than to promote a beautiful life". An ignoramus, to quote a character of Andrei Platonov's play *High Voltage*, "does mischief with a spring-knife, and an intellectual with his mind".

True enough, the new intellectual depicted in Platonov's prose is very radical and revolutionary indeed. But the products of his activity are in reverse proportion to its ardently progressive promise to bring about "universal happiness" at once. These claims usually lead to society's stagnation, the decay of its social and moral links, "spiritual emptiness" and a spreading nostalgia caused by the growing futility of human endeavour.

Against the background of the "heroic" and frantic social construction in which Platonov's engineers and innovators are involved, the people look far too ordinary, "passive" and prosaic. In *Epiphan Locks* the people live according to "obsolete" tradition, that is, they marry once and for life, eat the traditional pickled apples and sit around at their neighbour's place, indifferent to Tsar Peter the Great's idea of building the locks. For the fact that there

would never be any water in the canal and that it would be unnavigable, "was known to all the old crones in Epiphan as much as a year before. That was why the locals regarded the construction as the Tsar's whim, an outlandish idea, but they did not dare demand why the people had to be dragged through all that." However, the peasants in *Epiphan Locks* driven to the construction site by force, made their protest by running away to Old Believers' skits (settlements) and becoming recluses, which cannot be said for the people depicted in the stories *Foundation Pit* and *Juvenile Sea*.

A new era opens up new prospects. A country activist in *Foundation Pit* defines the people's situation as follows: "There's nothing of the elements left, and we have nowhere to escape." The sullen people, exhausted by hard work, remain silent when listening to engineer Vermo in *Juvenile Sea* who holds forth about future cows as big as dinosaurs and yielding a cistern of milk at a time, a heating system based on the power of avalanches and the beginning of the era of "technical Bolshevism" converting the entire world to electricity. Only Umrishchev, whom the intellectual and musical Vermo describes as a survival of historical idiocy, dares doubt

this prospect of blissful happiness: "Won't darkness descend upon the earth then?... You see, the light... will be swallowed up by the wires, and the wires... are dark because they are made of cast iron..."

Andrei Platonov offers a very interesting and novel explanation of the historical periods when the people had to withdraw into themselves, retiring from state concerns and affairs. Thus in *Epiphan Locks*, Platonov admits that the masses were more reasonable and revolutionary than the intellectuals, and often returns to the idea of the mystery of the people's existence, which only a few writers of genius throughout the entire history of Russian literature have been fully able to reveal and express. He regarded the people as the producer of all the material assets and spiritual values expressed by the intellectuals, who were also engendered by the people and linked with them by common historical interests. "Pushkin himself was a collective work of the people: quality laboriously derived from quantity." Moreover, Platonov discovered for himself something which Fyodor Abramov pondered over fruitlessly in the years of stagnation, and which puzzled those few individuals who had a biased idea of the peo-

ple's indifference to their own historic predestination. Although rather categorical, Platonov's ideas are still conducive to serious reflections.

"The common people," wrote the author of *Foundation Pit* in 1937, "live a special, independent life of their own, linked with 'the upper echelons' and 'society' only by the chains of their slavery. The people possess ample internal, 'secret' sources, which feed their souls and protect their lives from destruction by 'the upper echelons'. ... The people have their own policy, poetry, consolation and great grief; all these qualities are more genuine and organic in the people than in the parasitic classes, for the simple reason that working people have a mundane, mass experience of work, poverty and struggle against the sinister class of exploiters. In 'the upper classes' this experience is almost nil; that is why they are ignorant of the sacred truth of life, which they do not earn, but waste and reduce to the point of absurdity."

Strange as it may seem, some critics who write about *Chevengur*, *Foundation Pit*, and *Juvenile Sea* seem to utterly ignore these ideas which Platonov went to great pains to develop. The same is true about his articles written in the late 30s, his military

prose, concerned with the national roots of the Russian character and the people's historical selflessness, and the Bashkir and Russian folk tales which the writer interpreted in the last years of his life...

Moreover, the discussion of the recently published *Chevengur* and *Foundation Pit* is not supported by quotations from the texts against the concrete historical background. Instead, the critics calculate the frequency of the words "nostalgia", "suffering", "grief", "emptiness" and "wasteful" in Platonov's books. This primitive arithmetic is used to make the triumphant "discovery" that "nostalgia" and "melancholy" are the inherent and innermost features of the Russian people, and their history is an endless reproduction of death or the expansion of the void in space. The Russian people are claimed to be superfluous to humanity, and the Russian classics of the previous century, who focused on "superfluous people" among the Russian aristocracy, overlooked superfluous commoners only because the aristocrats' emptiness was so obvious. It immediately caught Pushkin's and Lermontov's eye, while the people's melancholy was hidden deep in the toiler's heart, and it was only Andrei Platonov

who managed to reveal it.

Why do we call Platonov an outstanding writer, even a genius? Under the circumstances, do we have the right to think so highly of the author of *Chevengur* and *Foundation Pit*? Isn't the writer's genius measured in full by the artistic discovery of a new historical reality about which we could only guess previously?

The abstract reflections on the subject of "Platonov, among other people"—Platonov, whose books stem not only from the people's tragedy but also from the writer's own philosophical tragedy deeply concealed in the comical, eccentric style of his stories—appear to be somewhat vain and precarious from an ethical point of view.

At the very start of his career Andrei Platonov created his own model of the near future in his crude sociological works and other primitive articles, essays and stories, where history and man were reduced to soft clay, easy to shape into any kind of new people and palaces of fabulous beauty. When his own bureaucratic plans, which he had already started to review, suddenly became terribly real in the late 20s and early 30s, he went through a painful period of discord with his own self, official social dogmas and the true spirit of his

contemporary reality. The clarity of vision and style (though based on abstract theories) which we observed in his early works, was obscured and made deliberately vague and complicated by confused dialogue, the illogical presentation of material and the introduction of characters who came from nowhere and vanished into thin air, in *Chevengur*, *Foundation Pit*, *Juvenile Sea* and other stories written in that period... This makes me think of one reader's shrewd remark that if the unnumbered pages of, say, *Chevengur* were hec-tically reshuffled and then fell into the hands of an experienced scholar, he would hardly be able to establish the sequence of events.

This unique feature of Platonov's imagination reflects not only the horror, weirdness, grotesqueness, absurdity and mythology of his contemporary reality (about which one can read in any article on *Chevengur* or *Foundation Pit*) but also the author's own depression, emotional turmoil, and spiritual and intellectual crisis. For, according to Platonov, the main thing for an artist is his soul and his outlook on reality.

Apart from his historically correct understanding of the people's life in the late 20s-early 30s, Platonov's attitude towards the actual real-

ity in *Chevengur*, *Foundation Pit*, *Juvenile Sea* and the play *The Fourteen Red Huts* was so weird that after a while the writer had to change it. He developed it slowly, at first in "documentary writing", as he put it (that is, in his articles of the late 30s), and then by putting his entire "artistic heart" into it.

Some scholars believe that in the late 30s criticism and circumstances made Platonov give up the heights he had attained earlier, though they have no reason to doubt the sincerity of his own criticism of his works written between 1928 and 1933. Here we can quote the words of the author of *Chevengur*: "For real life... it is not enough to be born once: one has to go through a rebirth every day", and, I dare add, this is so even in our progressive time.

Yet, it is perfectly obvious that what Platonov lost in the late 30s in experimenting, sophistication and symbolism of depicting people and events, he gained in the profoundness of his psychological insight into man and human relationships, and in the emotional impact on the readers' hearts—not only on their sophisticated intellect, the way it was in *Chevengur* and *Foundation Pit*. One cannot help thinking of his literary masterpieces—such short

stories as *The Third Son*, *Fro, Thunderstorm in July*, *The Country of Electricity*, *Who Are You?* and *The Fierce and Beautiful World*.

During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 Andrei Platonov's prose regained its former philosophical and socio-historical broad-mindedness (which had been somewhat lost after *Djan*) by focusing on the sources of the people's staunchness and survivability, and portraying their spiritual quest for the truth as is perceived by the mind, cherished in the heart and implemented by the hands. Neither did Platonov ignore the inherent, eternal qualities of the people, unfading throughout their long-suffered history, which he depicted in his wartime stories and essays, and later in his interpretations of folk tales.

The best works of the great Andrei Platonov, from *Epiphan Locks* (1926) to a fairytale collection, *The Magical Ring*, published a few months before the author's death, do not alienate the reader—they pull him together, revive him, and give him genuine aesthetic and ethical pleasure, which is not "furious and exhausting but humble and a gentle act of good will".

Vladimir VASILIEV

THE FINE ARTS

an overview

Nikita VORONOV

he developments occurring in the Soviet fine arts today are fairly complex. It is hard to classify, analyze and synthesize their heterogeneous components to make up an integral picture of the current events from within. This is because these processes develop so fast, because we are too much involved to analyze them objectively and because our art experts and reviewers are either silent or too timid.

Yet, I will try to outline the general picture. Unscientific as it may sound, I would like to divide all the developments into two categories, the unorthodox avant-garde and the more conventional easel painting, poster design, sculpture, etc. The traditional genres have begun to introduce avant-garde images and techniques to their own practice. Yet conventional artists are still confined to the old system of artistic values and stereotypes, restricting themselves to such genres as theme painting, monumental art, etc.

The reform has affected all the spheres and trends of art. This is especially true of the avant-garde because it was actually banned for a long time. Now that abstract or surrealist paintings have appeared at various art exhibitions, one might get the impression that there has at last been a breakthrough... Indeed, there were quite a few interesting pictures at the 1987

Young Artists Show and at the Labyrinth Exhibition held at the newly-opened Youth Centre in 1988. Until recently abstractionism had seeped only into monumental art in the form of interior and exterior small mosaics, which are often very large-scale. Take, for example, the abstract mosaic composition on the façade of a cinema in Togliatti and another one on the wall of a shopping centre in Zelenograd. The local authorities chose to close their eyes to the works and pass them off as "decorative compositions".

The Young Artists Show and the Labyrinth Exhibition were made up of openly "left-wing" paintings following the classical tradition of that trend. Yet, there was a disappointing similarity between the Soviet avant-garde of the 1980s and the classics. The more one looked at those paintings or "soft" sculptures, deliberately flat compositions or objects split into surrealistic associations and fragments, the stronger was one's impression that it had all been done before, long ago, and had been revived for no particular reason. The Russian avant-garde movement of the 1910s-1920s and the Western one of the same period and later period (up to the 1950-1960s) had already used all those compositional, colour and rhythmical techniques and painted similar nightmarish fantasies stemming from the subconscious.

Yet, deep down the new avant-garde is somewhat different. No wonder that its first "relapses" that took place after the 1920s involved the older generation of monumental artists as well. For some of them it was the forbidden fruit, and for others a nostalgic memory of their long-gone youth. But they very soon gave up their attempts to revive the past, making way for the young. It is significant that the bulk of the avant-

garde of the 1980s is made up of young artists. I tend to regard it as a phenomenon of social psychology, a conscious or subconscious artistic protest against the social and ideological values of the older generation, rather than an artistic development. It is, in fact, the younger generation's rejection of the endless high-falutin verbiage, which was so monstrously divorced from reality. Young artists could not find any other way of expressing their protest. They do not go on street marches, chanting slogans, but all their paintings express their convulsive striving for something different, which is so far only expressed by negative statements such as: "We are against your art, morality and values..." •

The secondary character of the new avant-garde can be attributed to the lack of a positive programme in life and art rather than to a lack of talent. After all, the young can think of nothing to oppose the ideology on which they were brought up. They can deny it, but as yet they have nothing to replace it with. There is, of course, Western ideology, but most of them cannot accept this either. All they can do at the moment is protest, but such a stand is not constructive. It is the tragedy of some young artists and an explanation for the weakness of the young avant-garde in the 1980s, growing extinct before it has reached its peak. The most talented young artists eventually return to the traditional forms of art and start experimenting within the framework of theme easel painting instead of rejecting the norms of the fine arts altogether.

And what is going on in traditional art?

The main thing is that there is a crisis in theme painting as it is conventionally understood. In our age

of rapidly developing visual information it seems highly unproductive to paint pictures showing a particular event and the emotions linked with it. As early as the 1950s an Icelandic author, Halldór Kiljan Laxness, wrote that it is absolutely pointless to paint historical pictures—suffice it to employ a group of actors, make them up, dress them in period costumes, take a colour photograph of them and enlarge it.

Pictures with a theme are gradually disappearing from art exhibitions, though those art experts and public servants who have assumed the role of art managers still insist that theme painting is the main line in Soviet art.

Nevertheless, theme painting has undergone a significant transformation. Why did such a transformation occur and what has come to replace this conventional form of painting? First of all, we observed the emergence of two trends, which gradually merged, enriching each other. The first one is termed "foreground composition". Apparently, it was the magnificent Viktor Popkov, now deceased, who hit upon this in his painting Bratsk Builders (1961). This was followed by Polar Explorers by Nikolai and Pyotr Smolin, Raftsmen by Nikolai Andropov and other pictures whose characters did nothing: they stood looking at the viewer and posing for the artist. The painting Bratsk Builders depicts a group of men against an unusually dark background. Standing or sitting and smoking, they are painted in a row and seen slightly from below, which gives them a somewhat monumental look. Those figures in the foreground, posing for the painter, were a premonition of a new genre, produced by the convergence of theme and portrait painting. Our Daily Routine by Pavel

Nikonov was of a similar nature: the picture showed several workers in a truck, alienated from one another and freezing in the icy wind, amidst metal barrels and bundles of wire. That picture, showing a grim aspect of reality, triggered a wave of angry criticism from official art experts.

Thus the artist's interest in events gradually gave way to his concern for man. He began to wonder what a builder in Bratsk, a repairman, polar explorer or raftsman was really like, and he painted a picture showing his hero the way he was—sometimes uncouth and absorbed in his own problems, and often lonely, lacking an inner contact with his colleagues and rather unsettled.

Frankly, there were not many pictures of that kind: they were the product of Khrushchev's "thaw". But the then President of the Academy of Arts and Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists Vladimir Serov, set a pack of critics on the painters. The critics were fully supported by Nikita Khrushchev, provoked by his advisers. The authors of the pictures were accused of slander, lack of realism, and formalism. Indeed, while updating the content, they had to update the form as well. Their style of painting grew sterner and less colourful, and its form simpler and more straightforward. As for the composition, it became more reserved and laconic. The new style was tabbed "severe", which was a most appropriate description.

In the Brezhnev period, or the years of stagnation, the "severe style" was gradually ousted by ostentatious painting. Suffice it to recall Construction Workers' Festival, Collective Farm Festival, Sea Festival and the like. Yet, the changes in form introduced by the "severe style", that is, the portrayal of "fore-

ground" figures instead of conflicts, survived. That was why the viewer focused on the people rather than the theme even when looking at the numerous "festival" pictures. Diverting plots and make-believe gradually vanished from serious literature and found their way into science fiction and thrillers. The same occurred in painting and to a certain extent in the cinema, though we only got the chance to familiarize ourselves with the best novels and films of that period ten or even twenty years later.

Nevertheless, fiction and the cinema made artists understand that it was not enough to place their heroes in the foreground and make them stare at the viewer; that 20th-century art is intellectual above all, and so it has to deal with associations, allegories, symbols and implications. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that theme painting grew more associative and turned to the spectator's memories, encouraging his ability to grasp metaphor. For instance, let us take Viktor Popkov's painting Father's Army Coat (1972). It is a self-portrait of the artist trying on the army coat of his father who was killed in the war. To the left and right we can see the ghostly figures of the people depicted on Popkov's earlier pictures, Remembrance and Widows. The coat is somewhat big for the artist, but we realize that when his father died, he was younger than the artist is now. The painting triggers a flow of associations, questions and ideas. Besides, it requires at least some knowledge of the country's history and the author's biography, career, earlier paintings and place in Soviet art. It sets off not only the viewer's visual and emotional perception but also his ability to think and compare, and it even challenges his cultural grounding.

The theme of the Stalinist purges in literature and art was rather subdued then, but some painters did dare to explore it. One of them was I. Obrosof, the son of a physician persecuted during Stalin's rule. In those days the subject of victims of war and the purges was regarded from the point of view of the authors' personal biography. What was essential, was that associations, reminiscences and allegories found their way into painting. The rejection of conflict in the theme, growing concern for man and the convergence of portrait painting with foreground composition laid the foundations for a new type of art. However, these aspects started developing more successfully only in the late 1980s.

The emergence of painting defying the principle of the "three unities" and opposing the demand of socialist realism to depict reality "truthfully" and "correctly from the historical point of view" was another tendency in the transformation of theme painting. The new trend combined the elements of foreground composition and "intellectual", "associative" painting on an as yet primitive level. The principle of the "three unities" was proclaimed by the Classical French poet and theoretician Nicholas Boileau as early as the end of the 17th century. Its idea is that the unity of place, time and action should be observed throughout any artistic work. A classic example of the implementation of this principle in Russian literature is the play Woe from Wit by Alexander Griboyedov, where the action takes place in Famusov's house within one day, and where the same characters appear in one act after another. Easel painting also adhered to the same principle: artists depicted one event at one place and within a fixed

time. Suffice it to recall Boyarynya Morozova, Ivan the Terrible and hundreds of other, less famous paintings. In classical painting the observance of the principle of the three unities was taken for granted, and those who dared deviate from it were tabbed formalists, like, say, Pavel Filonov.

Graphic artists Ignati Nivinsky and Vladimir Favor-sky in the 1920s-1930s, Leningrad theatre poster designer Nikolai Akimov in the immediate post-war years and monumental artists Vladimir Zamkov, Nikolai Ignatov, Boris Talberg and their colleagues in the 1960s-1970s created works which depicted events happening at different times and in different places. The seemingly unshakable principle was violated, but the monumental frescoes and mosaics grew philosophically profound, metaphorical and associative, acquiring an ability to express more than was actually depicted. The meticulous illusory character of the drawing on Akimov's posters, for instance, enables us to define the genre he worked in as a Soviet variety of surrealism.

Yet, all those developments were either experimental or pertained to a certain genre of art, for instance, monumental painting and graphic art (basically book illustrations). As for easel painting, the Soviet public had the chance to become acquainted with such pictures as early as the 1960s, when exhibitions of foreign art (Renato Guttuso's paintings included) were held at the Academy of Arts in Moscow. Sensitive and flexible artists like Ilya Glazunov immediately saw the potential of the new trend and made extensive use of it. Indeed, even a trick like depicting, say, Stalin and Hitler on one canvas with Jesus Christ or a seductive nude is bound to strike a

naïve viewer as something profound, make him think and compare, and also ignore the artist's technical flaws.

Glazunov used that technique very successfully, counting on the public's primitive artistic taste and narrow-minded yearning for outward profoundness that required no mental effort. The popularity of his pictures can be compared to a mass crossword puzzle craze.

Apart from that, we observed the appearance of far more serious works based on the same method but which really were profound and technically perfect. The enormous picture All Power to the Soviets! by Nikolai Prissekin deserves a special mention. It depicts the arch of the General Staff building in Petrograd (now Leningrad), with the members of the first Soviet government standing under its vault. Seven steps, non-existent in reality, lead to the arch. Lenin, dressed in a light-coloured shirt and holding a light-coloured coat behind his back, is standing on the fourth step. Just behind him is Stalin in a blood-red service jacket. Behind them stand other members of the government, soon to be destroyed by Stalin. At the very bottom (right and left) rise the allegorical figures of the Peasant and the Worker. Over their heads flying human figures—an allegory of Glory—hold a slogan, "All Power to the Soviets!", and six horses are driving the heroic figure of an ancient God.*

This brief description is enough to show that the picture is a well-thought-out synthesis of symbols. The colours, especially those of Lenin's and Stalin's garments, are as symbolical as the seven steps which they are descending towards the people and the space dividing those who made the revolution and

those in whose name and for whose sake it was made. The very estrangement, not to say alienation, of the Worker and the Peasant from the active, involved and united figures of the revolutionaries is also symbolic. Unlike Ilya Glazunov's paintings, where the characters just stand side by side, lacking an inner bond, Prisekin's picture has a clearly logical composition, where every detail has its own implication and occupies the only possible place in the integral whole. All in favour of symmetry and classical clarity, the painter nevertheless knows exactly where this clarity should be broken so as not to make a picture boring or trivial.

Well, we should not, of course, overestimate Prisekin's picture—it has too much of a foreground composition in it, a technique that emerged in the period of stagnation to replace conflict and action. Although it brings together a number of characters who never actually appeared in such a body in reality, the painting basically adheres to the principle of the "three unities" rather than defies it. In this respect some of Glazunov's pictures are more innovative.

The technique of breaking the "three unities", that is, bringing together events or objects that could never appear together in reality, paves the way to allegory, understatement and symbols. Naturally, this is more characteristic of artists who seek spirituality in art and life, that is, in the present and in the recent past, as well as in the religious and even mystical spheres. In this respect the exhibition "A Millennium of Russian Culture" was very significant. I will name it only a few exhibits to give you a general idea of its contents and trends. Among them were The Life Story of St. Iuliania of Vyazma by Yelena Shereme-

teva; the diptych Mockery and Crucifixion by Mikhail Arkhipov; the triptych Heritage by Valeri Balabanov; the sculptures St. Sergius of Radonezh by Alexander Rukavishnikov; The Healing of a Lame Man and Ecce Homo by Sergei Romanovich; the Florentine mosaics Andrei Rublev, Theophanes the Greek and Dionysius by Boris Neklyudov; the graphic sheets Repentance and Laments and Prayers by Maria Churakova; Two Images of Our Saviour and Two Angels by Alexander Livanov, and others.

I would like to dwell upon the triptych Heritage by Valeri Balabanov, made up of three vertical pictures: The Swimmer, Flight and Project. The painter uses the same technique of bringing together the past and the present. The Swimmer depicts the Moskva swimming-pool with a parabolical diving platform. In the depths of its water is the upside-down reflection of the Church of Our Saviour, which used to stand on that spot. It was built to commemorate the centenary of the Russian people's victory over Napoleon in the Patriotic War of 1812, on money raised all over the country; then at the end of 1931 it was blown up to clear the site for a new Palace of the Soviets, which was never actually built. At the lower edge of the picture is an icon depicting a rider with his arm raised and pointing forward.

Flight shows a gem of Russian architecture, the cathedral in Kolomenskoye, surrounded by the supports usually built around a spaceship. Indeed, the church itself looks like a rocket just about to be launched, and its shape is like a magical premonition of future starships. Under the support structures the painter depicted Andrei Rublev's Trinity. The oak in the picture symbolizes the Tree of Life, and the

church-spaceship a flight to Planet Earth and human-kind. Even the robes of the three angels have something cosmic about them, and their figures embody St.Paul's words addressed to the Corinthians: "There remain then faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love."

These pictures not only unite events which took place in different periods, but also transform them into symbols of art. That is why the paintings are charged with the purity and lofty moral potential inherent only in true Art.

Set designer Pyotr Belov follows a different path. His pictures are purely metaphorical. One of them depicts a huge cigarette packet of the Belomorcanal (White Sea Canal) brand, painted against a muddy yellow background, behind poles with barbed wire between them. Its top is torn off, as if for a cigarette to be taken out, and an enormous crowd of prisoners, who built the canal in the 1930s, is pouring inside.

Then there is the painting of a brick wall, with an unfinished coat of stucco and revolting greyish-green paint on it. A man is bricked up into it and painted the same awful colour. All that remains on the surface is his face and the open palm of his hand. It is Boris Pasternak.

*Another picture shows the thin body of a man standing barefoot on a cement floor near the prison lavatory. He has no head or face, only an open identity card with a photograph stamped in the appropriate corner. The card reads: "People's Artiste of the RSFSR **Comrade** Vsevolod Meyerhold. The pass is **valid** till February 2, 1940."*

Yet another picture shows a snowy expanse on a grey winter day. The face of Mikhail Bulgakov is

depicted in a dark thawed patch, where a spring probably gurgles in the summertime.

Pyotr Belov's pictures are acutely political. The author's own standpoint is clearly expressed in his paintings, just as in Valeri Balabanov's triptych. But not everybody cares for social analysis. Thus a whole range of pictures displayed at the Labyrinth and Union shows in the summer of 1988, though painted in different styles, were notable for their authors' non-compromising rejection or mockery of philistinism, as expressed in pop hits, the liking for pretty pictures or the craze for being photographed against the background of various tourist sites.

To sum up what has been written on the school of destroying the "three unities" and its modifications—acutely political, anti-pop or historical and metaphorical—I have to add that painting techniques here seem to fade into the background. Even the authors of the conflict-free foreground compositions were, obviously, more concerned with the structure, colour, brushstroke and texture of their works. Well, Nikolai Prisekin still attaches great importance to these factors, and he handles them in a traditional, classical fashion. But in many other cases we are confronted with "journalism in painting", whose contents could easily be described over the phone. The subject is so important to the artists that their sole aim is to drive the message home to the viewer, often at the expense of quality. The population's inadequate cultural background promotes such an attitude, for our children are brought up on pictures in their history and literature textbooks, and learn to regard art as illustration. I think it is wrong of the new trend of theme painting to cultivate such an attitude. In

fact, it is only the older generation of artists, among them Nikolai Andronov, Andrei Vasnetsov, Dmitri Zhilinsky and some others, who are maintaining the true culture of painting today. Hence the vital task facing theme painting today is to pay serious attention to the purely artistic, or formal and aesthetic aspects of painting without shunning current developments or returning to the plain "depiction of reality" or "foreground composition".

Strange as it may seem, it is the aesthetic, artistic aspect to which sculptors have recently been paying more serious attention. This might seem strange because the development of art is an integral process. What can be seen today, is that sculptors are more interested in the structure, movement, visual effect, density and correlation of the open-work and solid body than in the message of their works. Well, sculpture is a "slower" and more "expensive" art than painting. Besides, it is often harder to depict current events in one or two three-dimensional figures than in painting. Finally, the Soviet academic school through which nearly all the sculptors have gone is focused on the human body, and it is much harder for a sculptor to discard reality than it is for a painter or graphic artist. That is why sculptors do not experiment with form so much. True, some of the sculptures displayed at a recent Young Artists Show, for instance, works by Alexander Rukavishnikov and Mikhail Pereyaslavets, were executed in a "hyperrealistic" manner, that is, with the introduction of elements of real costume and accessories. Today this naturalistic trend is very popular in the West, and the young Soviet sculptors' attempts in this field are rather a tribute to international fashion than an

original experiment. However, their works are in good taste, and the bulk of the sculpture is usually made of white alabaster, which is well contrasted with the natural accessories.

The sculptures of Leonid Baranov are dynamic, spiritual and profound, as well as very plastic and exquisite in form. The sculptor is interested in the cultural and historical environment of the past, and he has moulded compositional portraits of Pushkin, Dostoyevsky and Gogol. His characters are often placed in a period setting—either a specially-constructed allegorical background or an unmistakable stage set.

Still, my considerations on sculpture lagging behind the present developments are correct only in general terms. In June 1988, the Moscow sculptor, Daniel Mitlyansky, presented a one-man show at the Central Artists' Club in Moscow. The author is renowned for his monument to his classmates who set out for the front immediately after the graduation ball in 1941. The monument is installed on the grounds of Moscow School No. 131. Many people also remember his humorous reliefs for the monument to the fable writer Ivan Krylov, erected near the Patriarch's Ponds. His talent is daring and original. The sculptor has a satirical mind, acute observation and an instant reaction to any situation that might arise.

At his exhibition Mitlyansky touched upon a subject concerning all of us but as yet neglected by art—perestroika now under way in the country. The witty composition called Press Coverage hints at circumstances well-known to the viewer: he is faced with the backs of three powerful heads—the heads of those who have no use for perestroika: a conservative Stalinist pensioner, a well-nourished bureaucrat in

glasses and a woman who claims she cannot part with what she calls her principles.

Those principles are expressed in enlarged cuttings from newspapers and magazines, which are plastered over the pedestal of the anti-perestroika trio. Among them are excerpts from various articles and statements in which they habitually slander Nikolai Vavilov, a great scientist persecuted by Stalin, Nikolai Bukharin's widow and other sufferers...

Behind them, facing us, stand those who support perestroika: scientists, artists and writers. Their deeds speak for themselves. Only the pedestal on which Boris Vassilyev stands is decorated with the cover of his book, Tomorrow There Was War. All these portraits are made from the material best suited for the purpose—clay. The gallery of huge heads and torsoes representing perestroika's supporters is introduced by the sweet face of a little boy, Philip. Though he does not understand it as yet, he is the person who needs perestroika more than anyone else. This whole section of the sculpture is entitled We, for these people embody the nation—all those who would suffocate without reform, for it guarantees the free development of their artistic or scientific talents.

The gallery of faces is followed by sculptures embodying the author's own observations of the changes that have already occurred in our life. The sculptor dared to paint the ceramics after the fashion of Vyatka toy-makers (Vyatka toys are a folk craft popular in this country) and combine clay with other materials, copper included. But none of this upsets the integrity of his works.

The ceramic groups contain unmistakable elements of caricature, which demonstrate the sculptor's

sharp observation. They do not claim to be serious: the author remains within the framework of the chosen genre—press coverage. But the humorous scenes, made so offhandedly, are in perfect harmony with the big portraits, where the sculptor's precise hand not only carved the external features but also expressed the model's psychology.

In recent years the role of monumental sculpture has increased significantly. The people's growing self-awareness has led to the idea of commemorating many outstanding persons whose names were erased from our memory, especially in the Stalinist period. Memorial plaques and statues to Krupskaya, Kosior, Kamo, Tukhachevsky, Dzhaparidze, Krasin, Chubar and many poets, writers and artists, among them Andrei Rublev, Sergei Yesenin, Musa Jalil, Mukhtar Auezov, Sadriddin Aini, Paruir Sevak and others have been put up.

The circle of people deserving monuments has been expanded, and the very conception of city monuments has changed. The pedestals have grown lower, and the fencings around them have vanished, thus bringing the statues closer to the people. They are no longer heroes alienated from the crowd but our compatriots, who were part of the nation and who shared its interests and concerns.

However, such a "democratization" of bronze figures was only one of the trends in the new school of thought. Another trend was to make symbolical monuments emphasizing the power of thought and unorthodox features of the depicted person, that is, to turn the monument into "a symbol in itself", as the French sculptor Etienne Falconet called it way back in the 18th century, thus pointing out that his monu-

ment to Peter the Great did not need any decorative elements to symbolize his hero's virtues, military triumphs, etc. But it is not at all easy to create such a monument in a big city, especially with the current fashion for low pedestals, absence of decorative reliefs, etc. As a result, some intermediate or transitional architectural and environmental elements are being introduced into monuments, creating a specific micro-environment which merges with the landscape.

A monument to Sergei Yesenin in Moscow (sculptor Vladimir Tsigal, architects Sergei Vakhtangov and Yuri Yurov), installed almost at ground level and surrounded by young birches, is a successful attempt of this kind. The poet, wearing a peasant shirt with a narrow belt, is depicted in a relaxed pose, his eyes lowered, amidst young birches, as if walking towards us, with the rye fields and birch groves of his native Ryazan land behind him.

A monument to Marshal Zhukov in the village of Strelkovka, not far from Moscow, (sculptors Viktor Dumanian and Andrei Dmitriev, architect Alexander Stepanov) is the most typical manifestation of the second trend. The emphatically heroic granite figure of the Marshal, draped in a huge army coat and symmetrically posed, looks like a piece of architecture because of its static posture and pyramidal shape. The figure is supplemented with some "transitional" elements of impressive size, which recall the flames of war.

As you can see, experiments with form are a sideline in sculpture. They concern not so much the central figure, traditionally human, as the elements around the sculpture, which create a particular environment for it. This trend is especially obvious in

monumental art. Sculpture in this country is one of the most realistic arts stemming from the anthropomorphic mentality. That is why various avant-garde trends, such as cubism, the "pure form" cult and others have had no impact on it whatsoever.

The political poster as a genre is going through a period of revival. In the past posters called on people to do their utmost to achieve certain results. Today the poster has become critical and accusing. This is especially true of Leningrad poster designers, who have recently held an exhibition in Moscow. One of the most striking exhibits was a poster depicting a negative of Leonid Brezhnev's portrait, with a caption which read: "The Party is the intelligence, honour and conscience of our times", i.e. Lenin's words which Brezhnev used to repeat so often. As it is a black-and-white negative, the caption is reversed like a mirror reflection to express the spirit of the stagnation period, which distorted and profaned the lofty revolutionary mottoes.

Another poster, designed by Tatiana Artemova, dwells on the same subject. It depicts the hammer and sickle, only without handles, hanging in the air. The caption goes: "Let's restore them!". I also recall two other posters. One of them depicts the familiar outline of a low-browed face with a moustache, but without the nose or eyes, the torso dressed in a civilian suit with a necktie (Stalinism by Yuri Leonov). The other shows a man with a tightly shut mouth, plugging his ears with his fingers (I Have No Problems by Alexander Lozenko).

The authors of such posters do not usually use "left-wing", or avant-garde techniques, and their artistic language is clear and understandable. However,

they willingly use surrealistic tricks. In addition, they frequently resort to photographs, composite shots, dot pattern imitations and other specifically industrial techniques necessary to emphasize the mass character of the poster as an art.

In conclusion I would like to say a few words about the present state of the theory of art. Interest is being awakened in the study of such artistic methods as composition, rhythm, proportion, scale and other aspects which have been neglected for a long time. Academician Boris Rauschenbach published a study on proportion, and Alexander Zaitsev on colour. Pavel Florensky's and Vladimir Favorsky's lectures on the inner processes in art have been reprinted at last, and the art studies of an original art expert and sociologist, Academician Fyodor Schmidt, persecuted in Stalin's times, are now being prepared for publication.

On the other hand, the domineering school of official art, socialist realism, is now subject to severe but fair criticism. To a great extent, this has been triggered by professionals, especially the adept of the theory of socialist realism Academician Viktor Vanslov, Member of the USSR Academy of Arts. Following the theoreticians of literature, he is attempting to extend his own rigid dogma beyond reason, claiming that it is quite compatible with experimentation or even "left-wing" pursuits. It turns out that in the 1930s and 1940s all Soviet artists were squeezed into the framework of socialist realism, and those who did not fit in were exiled, humiliated by critics and banished from art exhibitions. In the war years they received no food rations and were thus doomed to starvation. Today, having realized the futility of their efforts, the authorities have chosen the opposite path:

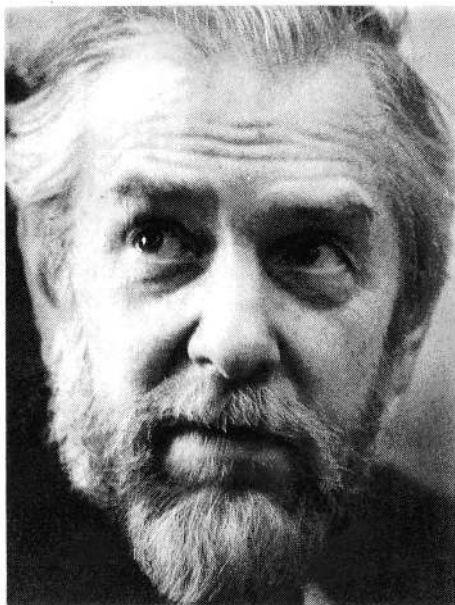
they no longer insist on chopping off the heads of those who do not fit into the Procrustean bed of their doctrine—they are going out of their way to stretch socialist realism far enough to fit in Pavel Filonov, Vladimir Tatlin and Natalia Goncharova. Under the circumstances it would be only natural to wonder in what way this variety of realism differs from the "boundless realism" of the French writer and philosopher Roger Garaudy, and what it is good for. Literaturnaya Gazeta has recently held a round-table discussion on the issue, and Sovetskaya Kultura printed several critical reviews of the method and V. Vanslov's latest book about it. What is especially remarkable is that the recent Congress of the Union of Soviet Artists refused to authorize new Rules of the Union which proclaimed socialist realism the only possible school and method of Soviet art. The new draft Rules printed in August 1988 contained no reference to socialist realism at all.

The draft Rules also grant artists the right to belong to different professional unions with programmes of their own and to exhibit their works without first submitting them to an official panel. Incidentally, Soviet artists are already making broad use of that right, though the Rules have not as yet been authorized. Exhibitions of the Labyrinth, Moskvo-rechye and other non-official groups of young artists have been held on a truly democratic basis. Left-wing artists do not hesitate to display their works next door to exhibitions of ardent supporters of realistic art, though both groups still eye each other with suspicion and scepticism. Anyway, the USSR Ministry of Culture has already started buying works by left-wing and non-conformist artists for its own col-

lections. One exhibition of their works was sent to the world art festival in Baghdad in the autumn of 1988. This means that democratic principles are gradually penetrating into the fine arts as well.

The attentive reader will certainly have noticed that many of the above-mentioned developments, triggered by Khrushchev's "thaw", have gradually gained momentum. This reminds us of an idea currently becoming popular with scholars, according to which art not only reflects life but often anticipates the future, shapes aesthetic ideals and purposes and speeds up progress.

Andrei VASNETSOV:



TALENT AND
PERSEVERANCE

Andrei Vasnetsov is the leader of a small group of artists who emerged in the 1960s and triggered the first and most substantial change in Soviet post-war painting. Naturally, those were hard years for him, but he was not attacked as fiercely as, say, Nikolai

Andronov, Pavel Nikonov, Ernst Neizvestny or other painters and sculptors whom the servile critics of the period turned into scapegoats.

There were two reasons why they dared not touch him. To begin with, Andrei Vasnetsov is the grandson of the famous Russian painter Viktor Vasnetsov, a renown-

ed realist, the author of the classical *Three Russian Knights* and other masterpieces, the architect of the Tretyakov Gallery and a personality who had a great impact on Russian culture. It would have been awkward to ruin the reputation of such a man's direct descendant. Besides, though Andrei Vasnetsov did make a decisive contribution to painting, along with his friends, he was basically a monumentalist. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, working with his teacher, Andrei Goncharov, and artists Viktor Elkonin, Boris Milyukov among others, he made the *Golden Moscow* mural for the EXPO-58 in Brussels, four murals for a Soviet industrial show in the USA, the *Moscow-Warsaw* sgraffito* for the Hotel Warsaw in Moscow, another sgraffito, *Higher Education in the USSR* for a Soviet exhibition in London, the *Outer Space* mural for the post-office at the Kazan Railway Terminal in Moscow and other works. Therefore, it was considered wrong to attack him and thus undermine the country's international prestige. He was

even given a chance to publish a "reconciliatory" item in the newspaper *Pravda*.

What was the matter with him? As early as 1955, Vasnetsov painted his *Still-life with a Black Hen*, which was daring and unexpected. At that time the very genre of still-life was nearly extinct, being, as vulgarizers of art tabbed it, "not social enough". The painting showed a dead black hen on a white sheet of newspaper and three white eggs against a dark, gloomy background. The picture looked alarmingly dramatic, mournful and even tragic for no obvious reason. Indeed, that black hen was a challenge to the innumerable optimistic pictures dominating all the official exhibitions. The next picture, *Portrait of a Woman* (A. Leonova), was just as puzzling—dark, sombre, lacking the conventional surroundings and striking for its sharp chiaroscuro effect. The brushstroke was almost sculptural, which made the portrait especially attractive. The model was not a milkmaid or Hero of Socialist Labour—she was a sad young woman, deep in thought. Later the artist painted a double portrait entitled *Hanging the Washing*.

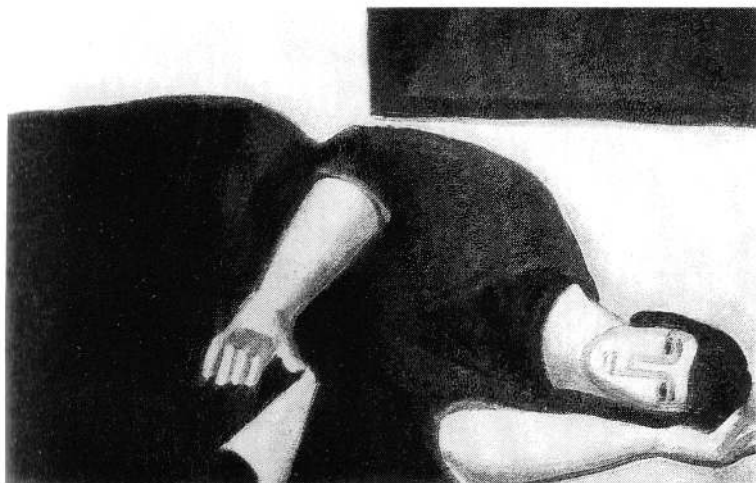
* Sgraffito—a method of wall decoration.



Breakfast (1960)

The models were not members of a festive procession or peace fighters—they were just hanging freshly washed clothes...

The pictures by Vasnetsov and his friends lacked thrilling subjects, conflicts or events. They showed life itself, often grim, poor and un-



A reclining woman (1975-1985)

settled after the terrible war. Yet, those paintings were not mere illustrations of life, they were charged with emotion, tension and drama. Their drama has nothing to do with the subject, but is purely artistic: it is based on the contrast between light and shade, spots of light, flat surfaces and volume. The active elements are not characters but colour, outline and sketched shapes. The pictures do not seem to be limited by space—they can be extended to left and right—but this is what makes them especially convincing. The artist's eye seems to focus on part of

reality, thus emphasizing that life is thriving to the right and to the left—real, not fictitious life. At the same time, the piece that is cut out of it is an integral picture from the professional point of view, where light and shade, proportion and other elements are in perfect balance. No wonder that all reviewers of Vasnetsov point out the integrity of his art and personality.

This does not mean that he never doubts or hesitates, but he has his own outlook on life and a whole system of views. It sometimes takes him ten to fifteen years to com-

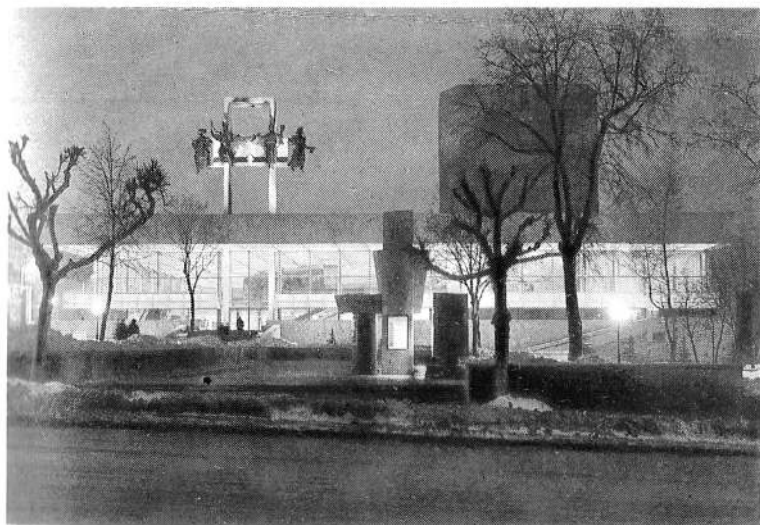
plete a picture. Distracted by other works, he keeps returning to it, but never changes anything—he only makes his brushstroke thicker, more solid and sculptural. He never doubts his principles, but he is very exacting about the quality of his paintings and the ideas expressed in them.

Late in 1987, the artist held a one-man exhibition at the Central Artists' Club in Moscow. It produced an unusual and, I daresay, gloomy impression on the public. Well, there was nothing strange about it for those who were familiar with the artist's dark palette. But displayed together in a suite of rooms, those paintings with their predominance of black, dark-blue and dark-green, with occasional pink or ochre-red spots, looked pessimistic, which contradicted the painter's own quiet and well-balanced character. However, it was not only colour that was responsible for such an effect.

It was said in the introduction that the most characteristic features of painting in the 1960s were lack of action and heroes posing for the viewer in the foreground. The characters of such pictures were actually heroes—

builders of Bratsk, assemblymen working high above the ground, etc. All that refers mainly to Vasnetsov's colleagues, not himself. His pictures have no foreground compositions or heroes. His models are people having breakfast, reading newspapers, talking, peeling potatoes, making preparations for a hunt or washing—all most ordinary characters. But their slow movements and often static poses depicted in dark colours make the pictures highly significant and dramatic. Moreover, people shown in the same room or even dining together are detached and withdrawn (a feature present in pictures of some other artists belonging to the generation of the 1960s). In the period of stagnation painters paid a lot of attention to people's loneliness and lack of communication. What made their pictures integral and complete, was the same set of techniques: colour, chiaroscuro, rhythm of movement and general composition.

The seriousness, spirituality and intensity of Vasnetsov's pictures can be attributed to his rejection of decorative elements in painting. He is against any orna-



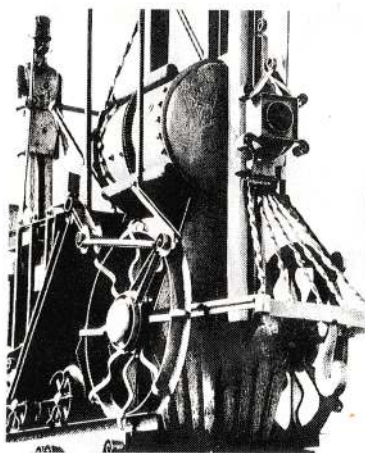
The façade of the Gorky Drama Theatre in Tula

ments on canvas. The lack of special effects emphasizes the profound emotion and spirituality of his works, but their essential features are dark colours, sharp chiaroscuro and sculptural brushstrokes.

The painter has the following to say about his works: "They say I use too much black. So what? If we turn to the 17th century, we'll see that Crespi, La Tour and Velasquez in his early period also used black a great deal. I don't mind colour. What I do mind, is colour impairing the emotions depicted on the

canvas. I can paint in any colour, but it doesn't suit my purposes. I am still wondering how I can introduce localized colour into my anti-decorative system. I haven't worked it out yet."

All that is only one aspect of Vasnetsov's work. He is a monumentalist as far as his calling, education and experience are concerned. But he prefers a broader definition for his activity. "I work in architecture," he says, "and I consider my work absolutely vital for myself."



Engine (1977)

His work in architecture takes different forms: he creates mosaics, sgraffiti and metal sculpture, and designs house interiors complete with furniture, tableware and lights. Vasnetsov is not averse to using a touch of humour or decorative elements in his metal sculpture. Suffice it to mention his contribution to the design of a wide avenue in the centre of Togliatti. That long thoroughfare, with the reservoir of the Kuibyshev hydropower station at one end and the Zhiguli Hills at the other, is lined by apartment blocks from five to sixteen storeys high. Frankly, it does not

look very urban at all, but even so, the designer has managed to humanize at least some parts of it. Vasnetsov designed several metal sculptures illustrating the history of transportation and placed them here. His *Steamer*, *Engine* and *Air Balloon* are from 11 to 13 metres high, and they create an "intermediate scale" that gives the whole avenue a more human touch.

The artist spares no ornaments: the front of his engine is decorated with curlicues, and the curving spokes of its wheels end in spirals. The engine is driven by a funny man with a moustache. All this is done in good humour, as are the figures of a lady with a parasol and a man in a top hat holding a flower in his hand, the "passengers" of the steamer. The emphatic fictitiousness of those metal figures and complete lack of resemblance to their prototypes adds a touch of fun to the composition.

Vasnetsov's most amazing skill is his ability to change a piece of architecture completely by introducing a few details. The best example of this is the ornamentation of the new building of the Moscow Art Theatre in Tverskoi Boulevard. He decorated the

somewhat monotonous façade of polished granite with unusual metal lanterns. The basic constructions spread out from the point of the fixtures in all directions, as if escaping from the wall and seizing the adjoining space. The lanterns have changed the appearance of the building completely. What seems to be an insignificant detail creates a unique effect, turning the façade into a work of art worthy of the Moscow Art Theatre, without any visible effort.

As we can see, decorativeness, humaneness and solemnity, which are not very typical of Vasnetsov's paintings, are embodied in his monumental pieces, whereas seriousness, drama and even tragedy, inherent in monumental art as such, are characteristic of some of his pictures, for instance, *A Soldier's Funeral*, *The Year 1919: Volunteers* and some others. The artist himself is not inclined to divide art into painting and monumental art.

"Easel painting would be impossible without monumental art and vice versa," he says. "I'm interested in the composition of the environment, and I apply my interest to monumental art. The col-

lective nature of monumental artists' work appeals to me very much. In our work we depend on many factors: economic considerations, the architect's requirements, the client's demands, the artists' skills and the viewers' wishes. It is, in fact, quite exciting... The easel painter seems to be quite independent, but this is not so. Monumentalists abide by external laws, and painters by internal ones. I'm not sure which is worse," he jokes.

Indeed, his artistic standards are so high that it sometimes takes him fifteen years or so to complete a picture. No wonder, under the circumstances, that an argument with an architect or customer might seem preferable to an inner conflict.

In conclusion, a few words about the artist: Andrei Vasnetsov was born into a professor's family in 1924. His elder brother, Yuri, was killed in action near Kalinin in 1941. Andrei began to draw early in his life. He attended an art studio, then the art section at the Moscow Young Pioneer Centre, where many other celebrated monumentalists of his generation, among them Vladimir Zamkov, Boris Talberg and others, used to study. From

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

1942 to 1945, Vasnetsov served in the Soviet Army, fighting its way from Kursk and Orel to Königsberg, and he was a sergeant by the end of the war. Shortly before the war was over he met a distinguished artist, Andrei Goncharov, who supervised Vasnetsov's work for an exhibition illustrating the war history of the 3rd Byelorussian Front. That meeting determined Vasnetsov's future: when demobbed, he enrolled at the Moscow Institute of Decorative and Applied Art. His teachers were Andrei Goncharov and Alexander Deineka. He gained a diploma at the Leningrad Industrial Art Institute, working under Pyotr Shukhmin.

Graduating from there in 1953, he began to work as a monumental artist. From 1954, his works appeared at Moscow exhibitions of young artists, and later at national art exhibitions. In 1966, he was admitted to the Union of Artists.

Today Andrei Vasnetsov is a People's Artist of the Russian Federation and a Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Arts. A holder of the State Prize, the Komsomol Prize and the USSR Soviet of Ministers' award, he was elected Chairman of the Board of the Union of Soviet Artists in 1987.

Nikita VORONOV

The Saga of the Artist



Rybchenkov

"You'll never be able to read, write or paint. Forget about art," said the world-famous eye surgeon Svyatoslav Fyodorov deliberately sharply, as if to emphasize the fact that he was a physician, not a magician.

ous eye surgeon Svyatoslav Fyodorov deliberately sharply, as if to emphasize the fact that he was a physician, not a magician.

He was speaking to the 82-year-old artist, Boris Rybchenkov, a man who had survived several heart attacks and never parted with his brush. Now that the old artist had lost his last hope, his life became absolutely meaningless.

Everything was against him. His direct vision was nil, and his lateral and peripheral

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

sight hardly reached 0.02 per cent, which was barely enough to enable him to grope his way in a small enclosed space. "No one in the world can cure your disease," the doctors said, and it sounded like a final verdict. The painter had to resign himself to the idea.

But then there was Art, which knows far more about Man and his abilities than science. And it came to the artist's rescue, helping him win the greatest of all victories—over himself.

...He painted in his dreams, and they were so real! "In my night-time pursuits," he was later to write with his own hand, "I was overwhelmed with a happy feeling of freedom. I could paint everything in a new way and was eager to reveal something very intimate and never expressed on canvas in very simple images... In the morning I woke up exhausted, and my happiness was tinged with bitterness, because I could work so well only in my dreams. That sweet torture went on for over two years, till November 1983."

What happened next? A true miracle! But first a few words about Boris Rybchenkov.

Born in 1899, he learned to paint from such famous artists as Alexander Drevin, Natan Altman, Alexander Shevchenko and Liubov Popova. One of his first pictures was an abstract painting—a tribute to the current fashion. Rybchenkov showed it to Kazimir Malevich himself. The pillar of Russian modernism scrutinized it for a while and finally said: "Your mundane interests are too obvious." But those mundane interests enabled Rybchenkov to find his true calling. He realized that the opportunities of realism were as boundless as life in its perpetual motion. Soon art lovers became familiar with his magnificent city landscapes depicting the streets of old Moscow. In this respect he reminds one of Maurice Utrillo with his old Paris. In a way, Rybchenkov is similar to the writer Alexander Grin. "Like Grin," wrote an expert on his works, "Rybchenkov not only depicts the actual features of familiar city but also adds some details prompted by his artistic imagination."

The hero of Alexander Grin's parable *The Scarlet Sails* said: "I have been able to understand a simple truth, that so-called miracles are

made with one's own hands."

Rybchenkov worked his first "miracle" when he started writing a book entitled *Stories of an Artist*. At first he wrote along a ruler, slowly and shakily, then his writing grew firmer and faster. Once his book was published, he felt he was quite capable of working another miracle. He wanted to do so very much, but he could not make up his mind. It was his wife, Olga Tsvetkova, who urged him on.

"You have an amazing visual memory," she would say, "and artistic hands. You must remain an artist no matter what. Why don't you try to paint? You've got nothing to lose."

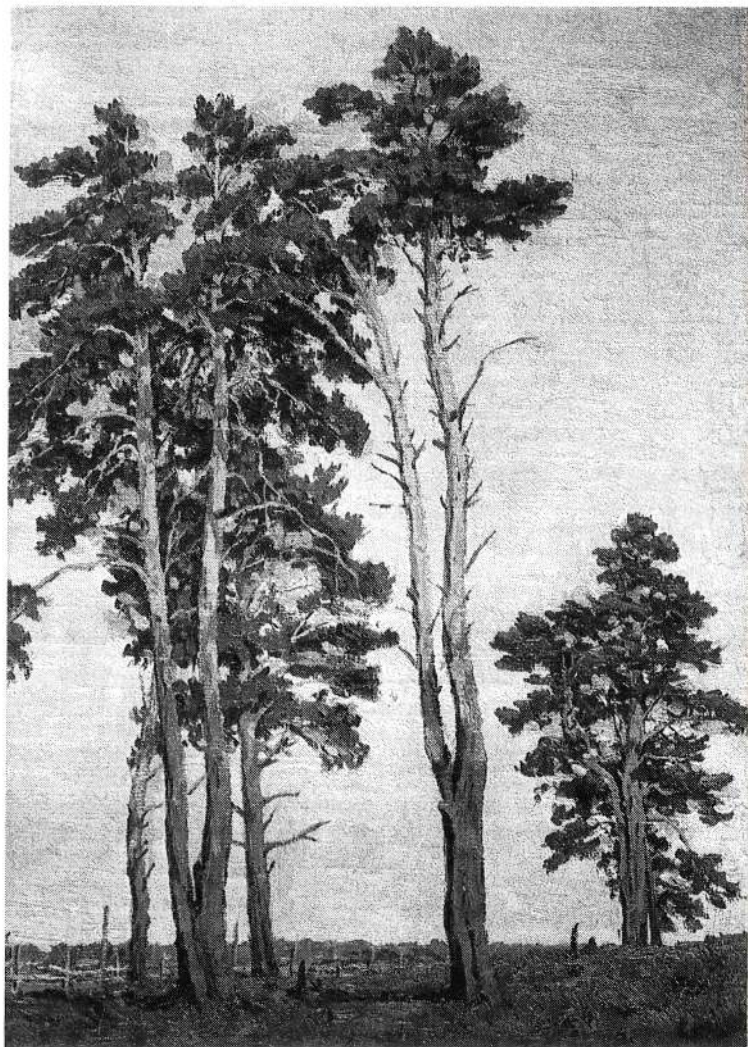
But in fact he had a lot to lose: he knew that a failure would break him. Nevertheless, Rybchenkov made up his mind, for he is one of those strong people who would never miss a chance, no matter how slim.

"In November 1983," says the artist, "I resumed painting. My blind method of work shaped quite naturally. When I had a clear image of what I was going to paint, I would decide upon the message, size, material, technique and colour range. I often

worked mentally for many hours, until the image stood out in my mind's eye, both artistically and technically, as clearly as if I could actually see it. Placing a sheet of paper on the table in front of me, I would mentally project the whole picture onto it. It was more difficult to handle the paints and obtain the necessary colours. Fortunately, I had a habit of mixing no more than ten colours on my palette, always in the same order. Besides, I knew which paints should be mixed to get a particular shade. As for the technical aspect of painting, my hands have a very good memory."

It sounds very simple, but it was not so in practice. The artist suffered from unbearable headaches. He also went through a period of failure, frustration, doubt, fear and strain. But the old painter withstood the trial, and his love of art triumphed.

His watercolours, gouaches and drawings reappeared at art exhibitions. The blind artist remained an artist in the best sense of the word, without making allowances for his age or blindness. Art experts appraised his new works highly. Reviewers welcomed the appearance of "a new, more emotional and



Pine-trees (1960)

modern” Rybchenkov and wrote that “he has made tremendous progress”. The public admired his pictures,



Spring (1985)

unaware that their author was blind.

In April, 1986, I visited Boris Rybchenkov at his studio. He showed me his new works: *Sretensky Boulevard*, *Moscow Birch Grove*, *A Sunny Suburb* and *Russian Winter*. He also showed me his recently completed essay, *Revelation*. I asked him how one could see without actually seeing. "Frankly, I don't know," he admitted. "But I'm sure that the brain plays the main part in it. You see, after two or three hours of

work I develop an acute pain in the left side of my head, but that's the price of the conscious risk I'm taking. Well, one has to pay dearly for all good things."

I looked at his pictures while listening to him and it occurred to me that words like heroism and courage described what Rybchenkov had done very well but failed to explain the miracle. The miracle, which eye specialists would also probably fail to explain, was a result of the painter's great love of Art.

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

for it is only love that can defeat darkness.

"The road to the impossible is open to everybody," says Boris Rybchenkov. "As for invalids like myself, only those who are capable of submitting their natural talents and life experience to their will are able to reach the end of that rocky path, provided they use all their abilities to achieve their purpose, regardless of the risk. There is no other way round it!"

Boris Rybchenkov the Artist has done the impossible. Doomed to failure in his clash with Fate, he emerged victorious.

In the spring of 1988, I visited Rybchenkov with a reporter of the Kuwait daily *Al Watan*, who wanted to see

the miracle with his own eyes. Rybchenkov showed us his new pictures and talked of his new plans. His book *Stories of an Artist* was shortly to appear in print. Apart from that, he occasionally published his reminiscences about other artists he had known in the journal *Iskusstvo* (Art). Two of his new landscapes painted from memory, *Moscow at Noon* and *The Old Park*, were to be displayed at a forthcoming art exhibition.

I agree with a wise man who said that everyone determines the value of his own personality; a man is great or worthless depending on his own will.

Gavriil PETROSIAN

Tatiana NAZARENKO:



A REBEL IN ART

Visiting an art exhibition in 1965, I overheard the following conversation.

"Tatiana Nazarenko will never be a good painter," declared a renowned Moscow critic. "She just repeats what's already been done, and I don't think she'll ever find a direction of her own."

"I disagree," said the other critic and added humorously: "You can expect anything from a green-eyed lady."

Ten years later that green-eyed lady became one of the most popular female artists in the country. Ever since, she has constantly been in the limelight, both here and abroad. Critics have never stopped talking, writing and arguing about her.

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

Claude Picasso, the great artist's son and President of the French society for the protection of artists' property, came here specially to see her: he had long admired her pictures. The Hungarian musician Sandor Galos, fascinated by her "musical" pictures, offered to arrange a "musical" exhibition of her works, where they would be displayed to the accompaniment of specially composed music. Peter Ludwig, a distinguished art collector from the Federal Republic of Germany, bought her painting *Circus Girl* for his private gallery.

As we can see, the short-sighted critic's forecast has never come true. As for "repeating what's been done" and her inability to "find a direction of her own", Tatiana Nazarenko expressed her views in the article *My Generation*, published by the magazine *Tvorchestvo* (Creative Work).

"Indeed," she wrote, "we often look upon people, nature and things through the prism of past masterpieces: we are surrounded by art, therefore we cannot look upon the world completely ignoring past experience. But this does not mean that Art stands between us and Life.

Any form is good if it enables the author to drive his message home to the viewer."

"An artist about whom they say 'He has found his own direction' is as good as dead, for it means that he has no more feelings and that he is living on his past experience, that is, following a certain theory or dogma," she wrote in the same article.

Tatiana is a Muscovite. There were no artists in her family: her mother was a doctor and her father an engineer. As a little girl, she loved music. Her music teacher was the first to appreciate her drawings and advised her parents to take their daughter to an art school.

She was an able student. After matriculation she got enrolled at the State Surikov Art Institute and began to exhibit her pictures at youth shows. In 1968 she graduated from her college, and in 1969 she was admitted to the Union of Soviet Artists.

She came into the limelight when she exhibited her picture *Execution of the People's Freedom Revolutionaries* (Narodnaya Volya—People's Freedom—was a Russian antimonarchist organization in the 19th century). She created several more historical paintings, but her main



Happy old age (1988)

line is our contemporary life and people of her own generation and social circle.

Her paintings are nearly always dialogues, and the people and events depicted in them demand concentration from the viewer. One cannot help arguing with the painter and her characters, hoping to get to the truth.

Tatiana Nazarenko is sociable and fond of noisy parties, where she sings with obvious pleasure, but she can also be reserved, stern and

silent. She is an artist in her life, work, clothes, behaviour and ways. She has what the French call charm, and her motto is to do what one enjoys doing, and do it openly.

She is fond of the Italian Renaissance, and calls herself "a stern realist". She is against any violation of artistic laws and traditions. She believes there must be rules, but only to reveal an original talent, not to crush it: it is within the rule that one can



Pugachev (1980) •

express one's unorthodox gift.

One of her latest pictures, *Carnival*, has an impressive coverage. Some critics referred to it as "a picture of mirth", others thought it a spontaneous improvization and still others a deeply philosophical painting. I think that all three assessments are right, for a person's inner world is made up of numerous other worlds.

One can judge her thoughts, interests and preferences from the very titles of her series: *Motherhood*, *Mother and Child*, *Grandmother and Nikolka*, *Uzbek*

Wedding, *Young Artists*, *Students*, *My Contemporaries*, *The Woods on Sunday*, *New Year Celebrations*, *Flowers in the Studio*, *Autumn Flowers* and *Evening in Moscow*. One of her latest paintings, *A Visit*, vividly conveys the gloomy atmosphere of visiting hours in hospital.

Her personal exhibitions held in several Soviet cities in 1987 were a great success. Later the same pictures were displayed in the Federal Republic of Germany.

In her short interview Tatiana Nazarenko expressed her outlook on art.

"What is the meaning of art? You know, I've been

pondering over this question all my life, and each time I come up with a different answer. The one I arrived at the age of 25 is not in the least like the one I would give now, and my present views will certainly differ from the ones I'm likely to have at the age of 60 or 70, if, of course, I live that long. It is, I think, only natural that our outlook on art changes with time. What will never change in my answer to this question is that art is vital for people—they simply cannot live without it. There is a trivial opinion that man needs art for inspiration. I think that real art must stir us into action, dwell on the most painful problems of our life and make us better."

As far as I can judge by your statement "Art must dwell on the most painful problems of our life", you have a critical mind. Does this affect your work? Are there any limits to your art?

"My work is no easier than that of any other artist whose talent and intellect urge him to express his outlook on life as sincerely as he can. I paint what I know well and what really moves me. And I paint it the way I consider to be the best under the circumstances.

Like many of my colleagues, I used to be infatuated with the French impressionists. Later I idealized early Renaissance painters, Giotto, for instance. Then I fell under the spell of old German and Flemish painters. And now I'm keen on 18th-century Russian paintings, especially those by Argunov and the serf artist, Grigori Ostrovsky, recently discovered by our wonderful restorer Saveli Yamshchikov. I think that without the reproductions of Ostrovsky's pictures my studio would lack something essential."

What is your outlook on modern painting? Is it necessary for an artist to depict only the present to be up-to-date, or can he turn to the past to raise today's most vital issues?

"My own experience shows that in depicting the past an artist can at the same time speak about the present, and an artist painting our times might, in fact, turn to the past. What I believe to be essential in modern painting is man, his character and the complex, often contradictory, aspects of his life. I'm weak on theory, and I'm just expressing my opinion, which can be confirmed or refuted by my own pictures."

What do you like in art?

"I think it is unnatural to like only one trend. I like art as a whole, in its progress and development. The development of art is contradictory. A lack of struggle between various trends, styles and individuals leads to stagnation."

What should an artist beware of if he wants to remain his own self?

"He should beware of trodden paths, current fashions and traditions, and of currying favour with influential critics or a certain section of society. It is easy to predict the results, and some artists prosper by doing this. But the viewer can grasp the message and sense the artist's feelings only when they are genuine, not borrowed. It is impossible to pretend to be sincere in art. Even if an artist makes a copy of his own picture, it won't be as good as the original, because the original emotions will disap-

pear in the process of copying. That is why I never paint things I don't feel deeply about—things I haven't experienced or seen for myself. This is my firm principle."

Once somebody asked her what she would take with her if she had to leave home for good. She replied: "I'd take a photo of my son and my two favourite books on medieval artists." The answer seemed unexpected, but Tatiana said what she felt at that moment, and she was sincere.

That is the way Tatiana Nazarenko lives and works. She depicts what she sees, the way she sees it. Her art is addressed to the public at large. She expresses the poetic wisdom of life, rejecting artificial theories and false values, and she does it as sincerely as only she knows how.

Gavril PETROSIAN

Ilya Glazunov:



THE "BEST-
ATTENDED" ARTIST
IN THE USSR

Somerset Maugham wrote that a man who becomes a legend is bound to be immortal. It will be up to future generations to judge the "immortality" of artist Ilya Glazunov. As for the legends, myths and rumours about him that have spread far and

wide over the last twenty years, they would be enough for a whole generation of painters...

No wonder that *Newsweek* calls Glazunov the most paradoxical figure in modern art.

Glazunov lives in Moscow, not far from the Journalists' Club, but it does not bring the artist and the press any



A family portrait (1977)

closer. Glazunov is critical towards most of the reporters who visit him, and they pay him in kind, complaining about his unbearable character and making up fantastic stories about him.

During the last war Glazunov stayed in the besieged Leningrad and lost his entire family at the age of 11. There is no doubt that the hardships he experienced so early

in life affected his character and outlook: he saw death at close quarters and went through despair, famine and hopelessness.

Andrei Rublev's Childhood is one of Glazunov's most famous pictures. It depicts a medieval Russian town in flames, with a dead Russian warrior in the foreground and his wife's silent figure, stiffened with grief, by his side. Next to her is her fair-haired son, the future great artist of early Russia, Andrei Rublev. His eyes seem to take in the entire picture of the people's tragedy. He takes no notice of the sword fallen out of his father's dead hand. He will adopt a different weapon, the brush. His art will enable him to tell the truth, punish the guilty and help the righteous.

The picture is symbolical, to a certain extent. There is a parallel between the Tatar siege of the medieval Russian town and the Nazi siege of Leningrad, and it makes one think of those who dedicate their lives to the struggle for peace and justice.

It did not take Glazunov long to develop a style of his own, which cannot be confused with that of any other artist. His paintings express

his cares and concerns, which, incidentally coincide with those of the visitors to his exhibitions. That was probably what accounted for his unprecedented, unique success.

His art is clear and understandable to all. He believes that art cannot exist without national roots. "Art," he said on one occasion, "is the perception of life as the greatest wonder. I am convinced that if the feeling of wonder is lost, one's ability for creative work also vanishes."

He is true to his themes and principles. There are four main themes in his art: Russia's history, classical Russian literature, contemporary life and portrait. Glazunov belongs to the realistic school, but his realism has elements of abstraction and symbolism. He is an uncompromising opponent of "cosmopolitan modernism" and "nonspiritual naturalism".

Ivan the Terrible is one of his best pictures. The unbearable torment in the face of the repentant Russian Tsar is portrayed with great skill. In his eyes one can read pain, fear and guilt for the blood he has shed. At the same time, they express a fa-

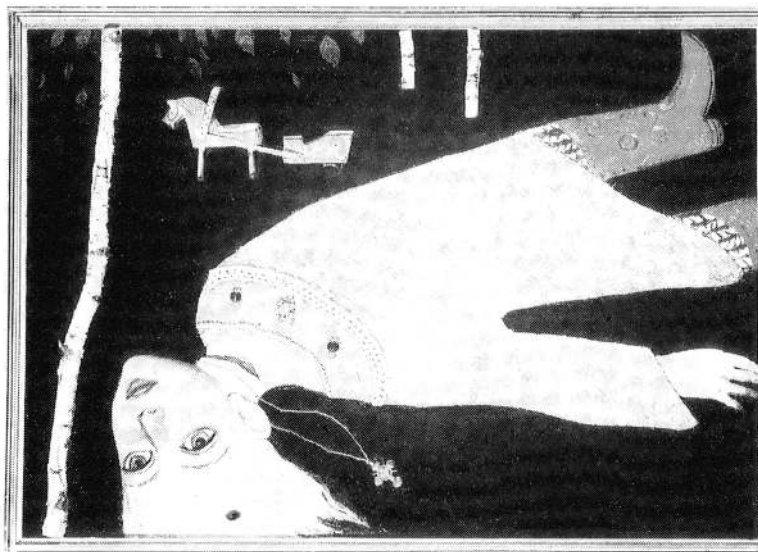
natical hope for God's understanding and forgiveness.

The touching portrait of a little girl called Vera is painted in the best tradition of Russian realistic art. His *Nude* is drawn in precise, expressive lines. The beauty of Glazunov's Russian landscapes is shattering and unique. The images of Leningrad, the martyred hero city besieged by the Nazis, are very thought-provoking.

Glazunov's "travel diaries in paint" make up a specific section of his art. During his visits to Chile, Laos, Vietnam and Nicaragua he succeeded in grasping the essence of each place, which was acknowledged by all those surprised and admiring Chileans, Laotians, Vietnamese and Nicaraguans who saw his pictures.

"I was amazed by the artist's ability to probe into the hearts of Chilean toilers within such a short period and aptly depict them in his paintings," said President Salvador Allende referring to Glazunov.

Glazunov's portrait gallery is very impressive indeed. His models have included Yuri Gagarin, Salvador Allende (Pinochet's men destroyed



Legend of Tsarevitch Dmitri (1968)

his portrait when storming the presidential palace), Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, Indira Gandhi, Federico Fellini, Maria Casarès, Luchino Visconti, Michelangelo Antonioni, Gina Lollobrigida and Soviet builders, writers, actors and representatives of other walks of life. Glazunov is also the author of the mural illustrating the contribution of the USSR's peoples to world civilization, which decorates the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

In the summer of 1988, Glazunov held another personal exhibition in Moscow. It was a tremendous success. The display was made up of 35 paintings, including two gems. One of them was *100 Centuries*, an enormous painting portraying political, religious and culture personalities of Russia, who lived in different centuries and professed different views. Now the painting is known as *Eternal Russia*, and reviewers refer to it as an "encyclopaedia of patriotism" and

a "pantheon of the giants of the Russian spirit".

The second gem was *The Mystery of the 20th Century*, painted 16 years ago, displayed in many countries and shown to the Soviet public for the first time. In that painting Glazunov tried to come across as a philosopher reflecting upon Russia's place in the modern world. The entire composition is symbolical and allegorical.

Hundreds of thousands of people visited the exhibition. The guest-book is full of praises, but the opinions of professional critics diverged, to put it mildly.

"Glazunov is a mediocre artist working on an amateurish level," claims a fairly well-known art expert.

"Glazunov is an outstanding painter. I am positive that the people of the 21st century will judge our contemporary Soviet art by his pictures," declares a physicist of renown.

"Glazunov is a gifted artist, but he owes his success to fashion," insists a respected Academician of Art.

Those three diverse opinions reflect the most common outlooks on Glazunov's painting. All three are wrong, and it is



Vanya in fancy-dress (1980)

easy to prove it. The paradox is that proofs almost never change people's opinions. Both the artist's supporters and opponents stubbornly stick to their extreme positions. Glazunov is still "the best-attended" Soviet artist today, as he was 20 years ago—isn't that too long a time for a fashion? His one-man exhibitions, held in almost all the European countries, were often extended, which shows that the foreign public liked him too. Why does he have so many opponents among his colleagues? What is it: blindness, envy or lack of understanding on their part?

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

The answers to those questions differ. To a great extent, it was the painter's awkward character that triggered some of the negative attitudes.

Let us see what his opponents have to say. In a nutshell, their opinion is as follows: Glazunov is trivial and monotonous, and the only attractive feature of his paintings is their subject-matter. His palette is poor, and his artistic imagination never rises above the average level. His characters—whether a Chilean girl, a Vietnamese woman or an early Russian Princess—are painted in the same style and tone.

As for Glazunov's admirers (millions of people of different age groups, walks of life and outlooks, ranging from the extreme left-wing to the extreme right), they consider him a real artist, who paints for his people and knows exactly what the people want and what they are interested in. The long queues for his exhibitions over 20 years prove it. Obviously, Glazunov has worked his way into the hearts of millions of viewers. How has he managed to do so?

Glazunov is understandable both to specialists and

to the general public: the Russian worker and the Ukrainian farmer, the Italian Ambassador and the British critic, the Laotian girl and the Vietnamese soldier.

"In order to love and understand other nations," says Glazunov, "an artist must love and understand his own people. You can't share the grief and joy of another man's mother if you have no sympathy for your own mother."

People instinctively yearn for the truth, and an ordinary visitor to an art exhibition has basically the same requirements as a specialist. They like Glazunov because he has proved that originality and accessibility are quite compatible.

Glazunov is a creator. He asserts his ideals without alienating himself from age-old artistic traditions. He does not seek originality for originality's sake, and he does not destroy anything. He is an unorthodox artist. What is good about an unorthodox artist, is that he is similar to everybody else, but there is no one like him.

And one final observation. The ideas in many enigmatic pictures by modern artists can be expressed by other ar-

Ilya GLAZUNOV

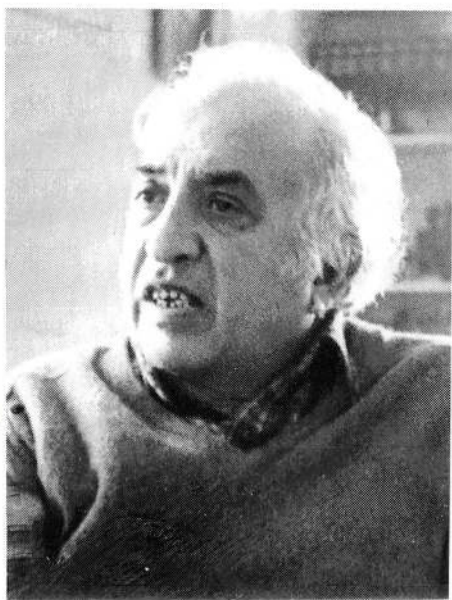
tistic means as well, but Glazunov's creations cannot be anything but pictures, for they can exist only in paint.

Glazunov is, naturally, aware of the fact that not everybody likes his paintings.

What does he think about it? "If an artist is argued about," he says, "it means that he moves people, which is the main thing."

Gavriil PETROSIAN

Akop Akopian:



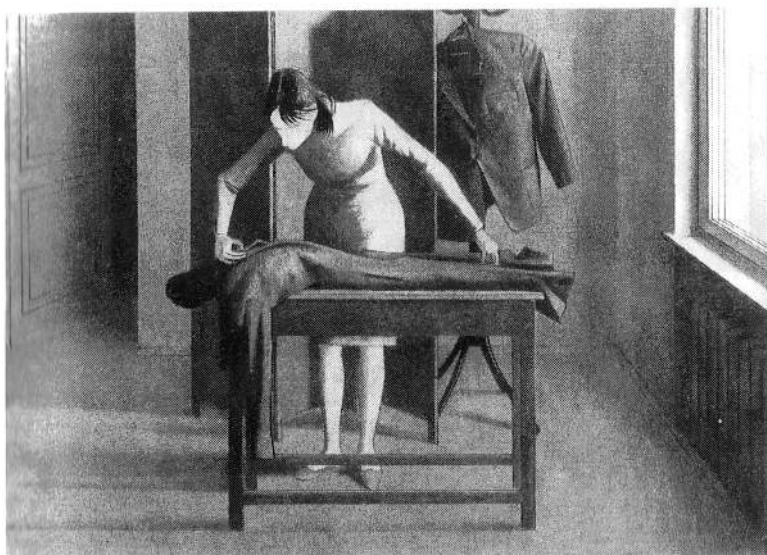
AN ARTIST WHO HAS
COME HOME

Apart from his brushes and paints, every artist needs a homeland. Akop Akopian finally came home when he was a mature man.

Born in Egypt in 1923, he was educated in Alexandria, Cairo and Cyprus. On the money raised by the

Armenian community the talented youth went to France to perfect his skills at art studios in Paris. He became famous, but he still remained Akop Akopian, an artist without a home...

Almost all his pictures painted abroad depict the unfortunate: *Servant, Laundress, Loneliness, Waiter, Grief, Tailor*. All his models



A dress-maker (1985)

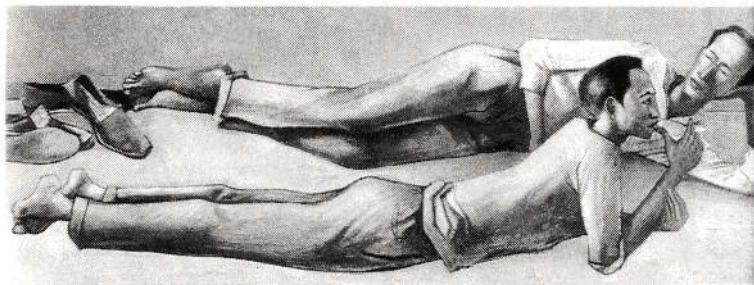
are little cornered people, their backs bent and their shoulders sloping.

In 1962, Akopian returned to the country of his forefathers, and ever since, he has been referred to as an Armenian artist. What is more important, is that he has recovered his national identity, which is obvious from his pictures.

Back home, he started painting landscapes, which he had never done before. He depicted his recovered homeland, its mountains, mead-

ows, cities and villages, and he did it in his own original way.

"The artist portrayed the same land as many other Armenian landscapists," wrote the renowned Soviet critic, Alexander Kamensky. "But he did it quite differently. His pictures lack the bright planes, fierce sunshine and lavish decorativeness, which have characterized Armenian landscapes for many decades. Akopian's Armenia is silent and deserted. Its colours are subdued,



Egyptian workers taking a break (1961)

and its harsh mountainous terrain is almost crystal in shape and texture. His manner does not in the least contradict that of other artists, who depict the Armenian landscape as bright and sunny. These are two sides of the same coin, supplementing and enriching each other."

His style is reserved, his colours are subdued and his images metaphorical. His ability to see the paradoxical in the ordinary, and the unexpected in routine is absolutely amazing.

The public was the first to understand Akopian's landscapes, then the critics. That was probably the way it should have been, for the artist submitted his confessional landscapes to the people's judgement. The people accepted him. Akop

ian was elected an Armenian MP and became a State Prize Winner and an honorary artist of Armenia.

When in Yerevan, I visited Akopian in his studio. I must admit I had never seen such an austere-looking studio before. Its master is a reserved, serious and quiet man. There is something in common between his manner of behaviour and his paintings: his stern appearance conceals a rich inner world.

He briefly outlined his artistic credo. He is interested in man's inner world, his relations with the world around and the interrelationship of things. He says that there is a human character to be found in literally everything.

"Akopian is capable of seeing the unexpected and

the amazing in minor details of everyday life, and of depicting the strange, unstable and passing in a static, strictly frontal and stable composition," remarked critic Sofia Yerlashova.

I recall a series of Akopian's paintings of men's suits. It is a cycle of works commemorating the heroes of the struggle against fascism. The suits, hanging from chairs or spread over seats, symbolize the absent. What an unusual and striking technique!

"If it is possible to express human feelings in a head, face, torso or hands," says Akopian, "why can't one express them in clothes?"

That is precisely what he has managed to do in his cycle *War Memories*. The viewers stand in front of those unusual pictures for a long time, feeling the artist's concern and pondering over the roots of heroism and immortality, and the causes of tragedy and death. The painting *No to the Neutron Bomb!*, using the same technique, expresses the author's indignation towards those who make preparations for another world war, ignoring humankind's protests. There are no people in the picture—

only things that have lost their meaning without man.

Akopian has held one-man exhibitions in many cities of the USSR and other countries, for instance, in Paris, Montreal, Sofia, Budapest, Berlin, Vienna, Copenhagen, Bologna, Lisbon, Nicosia, Belgrade and Prague.

Among his latest works is the landscape series *My Homeland*, including *Mount Ararat Before Winter*, *A Sloping Field*, *Landscape from Byurakan*, *Spring in the Garden* and *Road and Trees*. His feeling for nature is very modern and consonant with contemporary man's psychology. These pictures won their author a USSR State Prize.

Akopian's works are received enthusiastically by the public, although they do not rely on immediate, superficial effect.

Displayed in the Baltic republics, Akopian's landscapes appealed to the local public very much. An entry made in the visitors' book in Vilnius reads: "I'd like to thank the artist for his unexpected Armenia." A Tallinn resident wrote: "What a reserved manner and how much room for thought!" And an old Muscovite, who

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

came to the show leaning heavily on his walking-stick, said to Akopian: "I've received a new breath of life here." Akopian's sophisticated art is understood both

by simple visitors to his exhibitions and by art scholars, because he is a conscientious artist who does his work well.

Gavril PETROSIAN

Artist Ivan Lubennikov:



WORKS AND
VIEWS

Ivan Lubennikov is the youngest of the new leaders of the Union of Soviet Artists. Born in Minsk in 1951, he graduated from the Moscow Surikov Art Institute in 1976 and became a monumentalist. From 1972, he has taken part in many art exhibitions held in the USSR and abroad.

His monumental works, murals and three-dimensional compositions decorate the interiors of many public institutions all over the USSR. He has also created a three-dimensional metal composition for the Soviet section of the Auschwitz Memorial in Poland, and two metal groups for the old and new façades of the Moscow Taganka Theatre.



Tamara, wait! (1986)

Both museums and private collectors willingly buy Lubennikov's paintings. They are displayed in many art galleries of the USSR, in Peter Ludwig's museum in the Federal Republic of Germany and in some galleries of Italy, West Berlin, France, the USA and other countries.

The press describes the artist as "a happy talent" and "an extremely lucky man", and he himself agrees that he has been very lucky indeed.

To begin with, he was lucky to become a monumentalist, though Ivan does not like this word. "I'm against monuments because they don't make our life any more beautiful or happy," says

Lubennikov. He believes it his duty to create a good environment for man through art.

Lubennikov's outlook on art is very simple: he believes that an artist should do his utmost to satisfy himself, and not to surprise the public; after all, he is also human, and if he likes his work himself, somebody else is bound to like it too.

This truly is a simple approach, and I think it is part of the secret of his success. The critics are very benevolent towards him. Though their opinions differ, they agree on one point: whether one likes Lubennikov's works or not, they are significant and interesting—there is no denying it. This point of view is expressed not only by Soviet art scholars but also by their foreign colleagues working for *Guten Tag* and *Art* (the Federal Republic of Germany) and *Domus* (Italy). And although the general public always underestimates the new language of contemporary art, it also falls under the artist's charm, which stems from his sincerity.

Ivan is devoted to his work—all his reviewers comment on it. His wife, Natalia Glebova, a beautiful and charming lady who is also a

very original artist, constantly says when interviewed about him: "Besides, he works so very hard!"

Nowadays he has less time for work. As Secretary of the Union Board, he has to attend numerous conferences and speak to reporters. "As far as I'm concerned, perestroika means a growing number of interviews," Ivan jokes sadly.

Here is one more short interview, this time concerning Ivan Lubennikov himself, not his Union.

How would you define the essence, ideas and goals of your art?

"An artist defines his creative activity by his work, rather than words. My professional interests range from architecture and the design of large exhibitions to small easel paintings.

"I think that all of us have more or less the same goals. First, to express our own inner worlds, and second, to understand the world around us and find ways of depicting, transforming and enriching it in our works. These goals are objective rather than subjective."

Does the current perestroika in our country affect your art?

Perestroika affects every-



Sisters (1983)

thing. I find life more interesting now. In view of the new prospects, every man as a citizen and member of society feels an urge to use his moral potential for worthy purposes.

"I admit that ten years ago it wouldn't have occurred to me to spend a large part of my time on social work. I wouldn't have concerned myself with anything but art then."

Has the artist's life changed recently?

"I think it's the viewer's life that has changed. He has been given the chance to see far more works of art and a broader range of them."

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

Who buys your pictures?

"Many people, including numerous Western collectors, who purchase them through the Export Salon of the Artists' Union. The local galleries also buy my pictures five or six times a year, which is much more often than they used to. The Union's Exhibition Board and Soviet collectors also buy my pictures. Painting is a side line for me: my main occupation is monumental art."

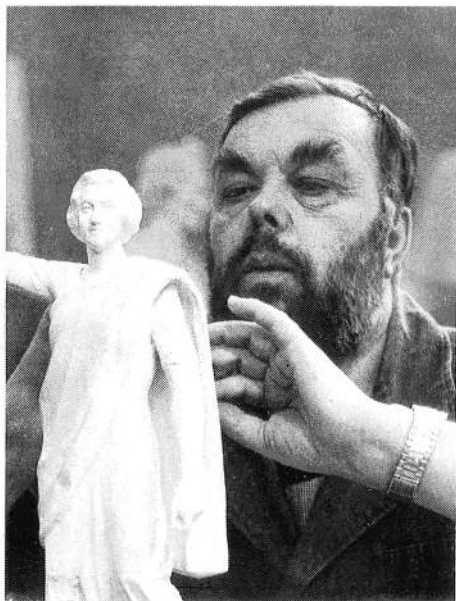
And the last question: what is your credo?

"Dostoyevsky said that art contributes to the softening

of human nature, and I fully agree with him. I haven't yet come across an alternative in reality. Any opposite tendency turns into prejudice, monopoly on the truth, fixed ideas and dogma into the bargain, which does irreparable damage to culture. For culture is the right to express one's thoughts and feelings. The same is true about art, being a component of culture. The first sign of a lack of culture is the assertion of one's own absolute righteousness."

Nikolai NEICH

Oleg KOMOV:



PURSuing THE TRUTH
OF LIFE

Oleg Komov belongs to "the middle generation" of Soviet sculptors. His monuments are installed in many Soviet cities. He is also the author of many expressive sculptural portraits and compositions, as well as a whole series of works devoted to Pushkin. Born in 1932, he graduated

from the Year 1905 Art School and the Surikov Art Institute, where he studied under the outstanding Soviet sculptor, Nikolai Tomsky, a former President of the USSR Academy of the Arts. Oleg Komov was his favourite pupil.

Komov began to take part in both young artists' and nationwide art exhibitions

when he was still a student. His works, which often depicted simple situations from the hard but hope-inspired post-war years, did not always receive favourable reviews. In those days it was believed that sculpture, even small statues, should deal exclusively with heroic and socially significant events, whereas Komov depicted a young girl talking over the phone, a mother with a pram, a boy with his pet dog, etc. But those small bronze figurines were lyrical and humane, and portrayed everyday life with humour and a gentle smile. At that hard time Komov was supported by the monthly *Yunost* and its editor, writer Boris Polevoi. The young sculptor's first exhibition was held on the magazine's premises.

Apart from small bronze groups, Komov created many informal portraits of ordinary people in their everyday clothes, such as *Worker in a Cap*, *Altai Girl* and *Pioneer of the Virgin Lands*. In the early 1960s Oleg Komov and his college friend, Yuri Chernov, went on a working trip to the Altai, which enriched the two young artists tremendously. Before the trip Komov was

known as a young gifted artist, but his first Altai works exhibited in 1963 drew the public's attention to him and established the recent graduate's reputation as a capable professional specializing in sculptural groups, with an expressive language of his own, an enviable sense of space and remarkable understanding of material.

Komov has always considered the artist's sense of material and its texture to be of paramount importance for every sculpture, as essential as its subject and composition. By his Altai pieces Komov proved that the material often determines the composition and technique. The bronze *Evening* has a three-dimensional structure with plenty of air and large distances between the figures. Despite the sketchy composition, the group is reasonably detailed. As for the granite figure of *Altai Girl*, it is almost flat: the sculpture looks like a piece of rock. In that period Komov used stone a great deal, but later he began to prefer metal—aluminium, cast iron and especially bronze.

In the 1960s Komov developed his own range of subjects which covered both his compositions and his por-

traits. Continuing to make portraits of his contemporaries and compositions on current events, he grew interested in Russian history and the individuals who promoted the country's cultural progress, especially Pushkin.

In the late 1960s-early 1970s he created *Pushkin and Pushchin*, *Pushkin Seated*, *Pushkin Near the Lattice (A White Night)*, *Pushkin and Goncharova* and other sculptures depicting the great poet. In the process the sculptor evolved his own interpretation of Pushkin's character. Komov portrays Pushkin not as a man of genius towering over other people, but as a person who loves, thinks, meets with friends, gets jealous and admires nature like all humans. Only his feelings and sufferings are much stronger, deeper and more painful than those of ordinary people. His genius is not in rhyming words, but in his profound thoughts and feelings and in his vulnerability, which he could express with pen on paper like nobody else.

The sculptor applied his outlook to other sculptural portraits of great Russians. Suffice it to recall Andrei Rublev pondering over another masterpiece, or Alexander



Andrei Rublev (bronze, 1977)

Suvorov leaning over a map—not a daring military leader but an intelligent strategist, capable of taking the enemy by surprise; or Konstantin Tsiolkovsky looking at the starry sky through an open window and thinking about starships and other worlds.

Having established himself

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

as a sensitive and subtle interpreter of Russia's history and its great cultural figures Komov gained a certain prestige. He was then commissioned to design some new monuments—a right he had to compete for at professional contests. Among them are the monuments to Pushkin erected in the Moldavian village of Dolna (now Pushkino), Kalinin, Boldino and Madrid. He is also the author of the monument to the great Russian artist, Ilya Repin, near Kalinin, in the grounds of what is known as the “academic villa” of the Russian Federation's Union of Artists; to the artist Venetianov in Vyshni Volochok, the writer Saltykov-Shchedrin in Kalinin, Pushkin and his Nanny in Mikhailovskoye, Suvorov in Moscow, Prince Dmitri Donskoi at the Kulikovo Field Museum and some others.

Since 1970, sixteen monuments designed by him have been erected. Actually, one has a chance to attend the unveiling ceremony of one of his monuments at least once a year. For instance, in the Year of India Komov's monument to Indira Gandhi was unveiled in Moscow, and to Mahatma Gandhi in India.

Yet, it is his statues to Pushkin that fully express the credo of Komov the monumentalist. A sculptural composition of this kind usually depicts one feature of the portrayed person which the author considers essential, or maybe a specific action or state of mind. That is why monuments are usually appealing, leading, inspiring, etc. Komov's attitude is different: he gives a comprehensive outline of his character's personality and sometimes emphasizes his less typical features. The sculpture of Pushkin in Kalinin stands in a relaxed pose with a thoughtful expression on his face. He is neither reciting his verses nor composing them in his mind. This statue, like the monument in Boldino, expresses the human, rather than poetic features of Pushkin's character. The sculptor creates a realistic, easily recognizable image, to which his contemporaries can ascribe the familiar features through associative thinking.

The monument to Suvorov in Moscow has nothing heroic about it either. The legendary military leader is looking at us, or his victorious armies marching past, with a hint of a smile. Incidentally, many of the artists

who submitted their draft projects to the judges of the contest depicted Suvorov as a triumphant rider. Komov's Suvorov is more humane and, therefore, closer to us. Looking at the statue, we are reminded of Suvorov's warm attitude towards his men or of his sudden impulses, like crowing in public or sending his Empress a funny verse instead of an official war report.

The monument to Andrei Rublev standing in the grounds of the former Andronikov Monastery in Moscow, is extratemporal, to a certain extent. This expresses our traditional idea of the early Russian icon painter and reminds us of the sculptor's small figurines. It is one of those monuments whose hero does not appeal to the viewer or carry on a silent dialogue with him. Andrei Rublev's gaze is not fixed on us, but turned into his own soul. His pose is static and serene, and he is just about to start on a new icon on two boards, well-dried, oiled and primed. Leaning his left hand against the larger board and supporting the smaller one with his right the artist is deep in thought. He is wondering whether anyone will need his perfectly har-



Alexander Suvorov (bronze, 1982)

monious and serene pictures at the turbulent beginning of the 15th century, with Russia not as yet completely liberated from the disgraceful Tatar yoke. Rublev's head is slightly lowered and his left leg is bent at the knee and turned outward. He is barefoot and dressed in a long shirt with a belt. His

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

garments are loose enough for us to guess where they stick to his body and outline its shape, and where they hang freely.

Komov's Rublev is a philosopher: the sculptor has succeeded in showing his hero's spirituality. The artist's face is sophisticated and noble, kind and humane—there is not a grain of severe fanaticism about it. We do not know what the icon painter looked like, but Komov's portrait of him, imaginary as it is, seems genuine enough. It is convincing because one believes that Komov's Rublev could actually have created the famous *Trinity*.

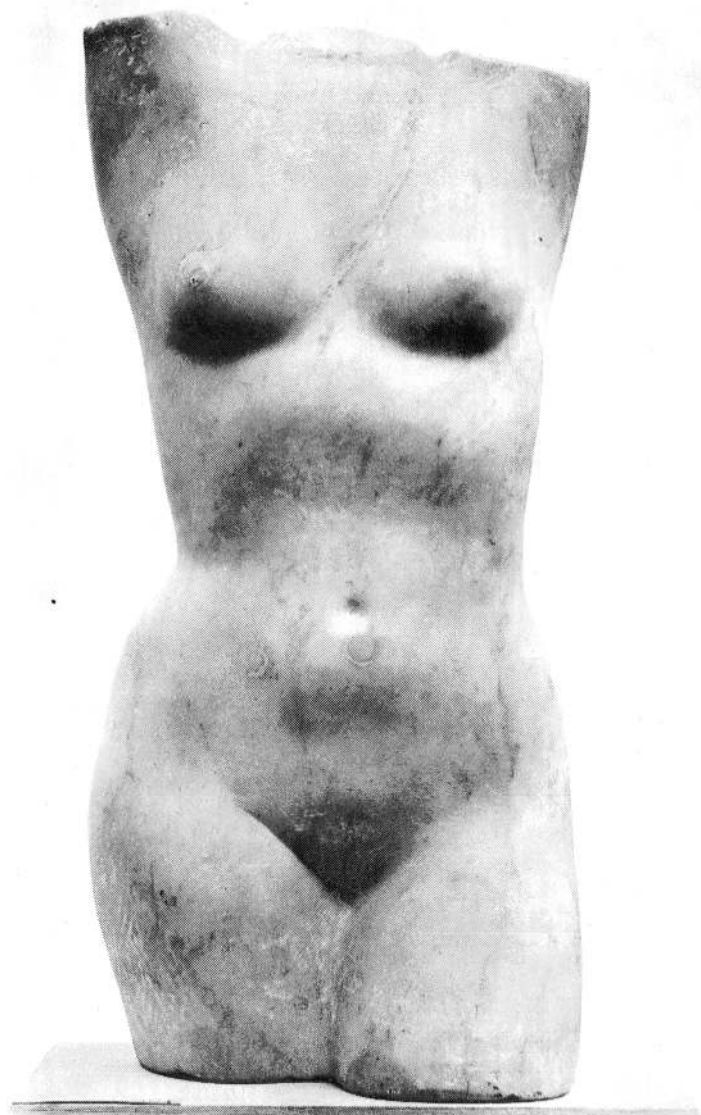
The monument to Rublev designed by Komov is not only an event in the sculptor's own life, but also a step forward in the implementation of Lenin's plan of visual propaganda, even if somewhat belated. Soon after the publication on April 12, 1918, of the famous Decree "On the Removal of Monuments Commemorating Tsars and Their Servants", and "On the Development of Projects of Monuments on the Russian Socialist Revolution", signed by Lenin and passed by the Council of the People's Commissars, the

newspaper *Izvestia* printed a list of persons (July 1918), to be commemorated in monuments. That list, which opened with the names of great revolutionaries of the past, leaders of peasant uprisings and toilers' struggles, contained the names of three great Russian artists—Andrei Rublev, Alexander Ivanov and Mikhail Vrubel.

It was only seventy years later that a sculptor born well after Lenin's plan came into existence had the honour of casting in bronze the dreams of the revolutionaries of 1918 and thus putting into practice the great Lenin's behest.

A two-figure monument to Venetsianov, where the artist is portrayed painting his traditional model, a Russian peasant woman feeding her baby, is also very unusual. The sculptor has not only created a recognizable image of the painter, standing at his easel, deep in thought, but has also made him humane and close to our contemporaries, who are sick and tired of verbiage and pompous declarations. The monument to Venetsianov is true to life. The sculptor places great emphasis on details, which are depicted with convincing pre-

Oleg KOMOV



A woman's torso (marble, 1966)

The Fine Arts: *an overview*

cision. What is important to him over all, is not so much the form and large size as the environment of the statue, creating the atmosphere necessary for it to be perceived correctly. Among the accessories there might be 19th-century style lanterns, 200-year-old guns (like those by Suvorov's feet), a peasant dress and headwear like the ones introduced into the

monument to Venetsianov, or old trees around the statue.

Such is the credo of sculptor Oleg Komov, People's Artist of the USSR, winner of Russian Federation and USSR State Prizes, Member of the USSR Academy of Arts and Board Secretary of the Russian Federation's Union of Artists.

Nikita VORONOV

Union of Soviet Artists: Facts and Figures

The Union of Soviet Artists, a voluntary organization uniting 21,000 professionals, is one of the biggest artistic associations in the country. Among its members are painters, sculptors, graphic artists, craftsmen, stage and film set designers and art scholars.

The Union has a pyramidal structure. The basic trends of its activity are determined by the board, which is elected by a national congress of artists. The elected boards of the 15 constituent republics' unions and their territorial, regional and city branches enjoy broad autonomy. Each of these organizations holds its own exhibitions.

An artist applying for membership is expected to have a higher art education and works worthy of being submitted to the admission panel, made up of top-class experts. To become a member of the Union of Soviet Artists means to be universally recognized.

The Union has members representing 84 of the country's nations, from the largest to the smallest, such as the Mordvinians (14), Komis

(14), Maris (9), Udmurts (11), Tuvinians (27), Karakalpaks (7), Karaims (22), Avars (4) and Nogaitsi (4). The Union is a truly international association, including Poles, Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Romanians, Finns and Spaniards. All of them, naturally, enjoy equal rights.

The main trends in the Union's activity are the advanced training of its members, the organization of exhibitions, the construction of monuments, industrial art and interior design, book design, the popularization of art, the theory of art and education for young artists and art critics.

The Union has 1,500 young members (under 35 years old). Moreover, the Youth Section attached to the Union includes over 4,200 artists. It was formed 15 years ago and is attractive to the young because it offers them all kinds of opportunities, such as art exhibitions, contests, trips, work at professional studios, etc., all fully subsidized by the Union and guided by experienced professionals.

Female artists, working in all genres, make up 25 per cent of the membership. Among them are such artists of national and international renown as Tatiana Yablonskaya, Jemma Skulme, Tatiana Nazarenko and Tatiana Mavrina.

Every year the Union holds over 5,000 exhibitions, which are attended by more than 12 million people. These can be divided into national, republic-wide, inter-republic, regional and city exhibitions, as well as special individual and group exhibitions. The Union maintains broad cooperation with other countries. Over the past five years 234 Soviet art exhibitions were held abroad, and 107 foreign ones—in the USSR.

In the past five years 4,370 members have stayed at the Union's holiday homes working there for two months each, with all expenses paid. In addition, 40 touring groups comprising 915 artists have travelled to all parts of the country, with the same financial backing.

The Union has publishing facilities and issues period-

icals of its own. It also has a professional and industrial base, the Art Foundation of the USSR. The Foundation runs various enterprises and studios producing items upon the orders of state and other bodies. For example, it erects monuments and memorials, creates murals and designs large economic exhibitions. The Foundation employs both members of the Union and other artists. Its funds are made up of the profit from the above-mentioned enterprises, two per cent on the sale of every work of art in the Foundation shops and membership fees, which amount to 3 roubles a year per member.

The Art Foundation builds holiday homes and exhibition halls and pays the artists' sick benefits and old-age pensions. It also allots funds for the artists' exhibition contracts.

The 500 organizations and enterprises of the Foundation employ over 62,000 people (from artists to unskilled workers), among them more than 36,000 professionals, 14,611 of them being members of the Union of Soviet Artists.

World Decade of Cultural Development

On UNESCO's initiative, the 41st Session of the UN General Assembly declared the years 1988 to 1997 the World Decade of Cultural Development. The Soviet Union, a consistent supporter of UN and UNESCO initiatives, backed this idea, and a national committee of the USSR was established in support of the World Decade of Cultural Development. The Committee members are distinguished public figures, scientists, writers and artists.

Many of the country's public organizations are taking an active part in the Decade, including the Soviet Peace Committee, the Cultural Foundation of the USSR and professional artists' unions.

"The Decade will promote the moral aspects of world politics and motivate those working in science, the arts and education to do their utmost to save the world from a nuclear holocaust, to prevent an ecological catastrophe and resolve other global problems facing humanity today," said Y. Carlov, Chairman of the USSR National Committee, First Vice-Chairman of the Commission of the USSR for

UNESCO. "We have worked out a detailed programme for the Decade, aimed at solving the major global problems which humanity will be confronted with on the threshold of the 21st century."

The strategic aims of the Decade are closely linked with the most important problems of international politics and socio-economic development, the efforts to ease international tensions and promote disarmament and trust among nations.

In addition, participation in the programme will benefit each individual nation and focus its attention on the existing problems, as well as giving it an opportunity to enhance the role of culture in the people's development and to study the positive experience of other countries' social and cultural policies.

The agenda of an extended session of the USSR National Committee in support of the World Decade of Cultural Development held in Moscow included a seminar of Soviet and foreign cultural figures. They discussed the role of artists in this unique initiative of UNESCO.

"What is essential, is to make politics moral," said Genrikh Borovik, Soviet writer and public figure, addressing the seminar. This idea is by no means utopian. The thaw in East-West relations is facilitating its implementation. The British writer Graham Greene expressed the opinion that the time of suspicion is over and the time of hope has come.

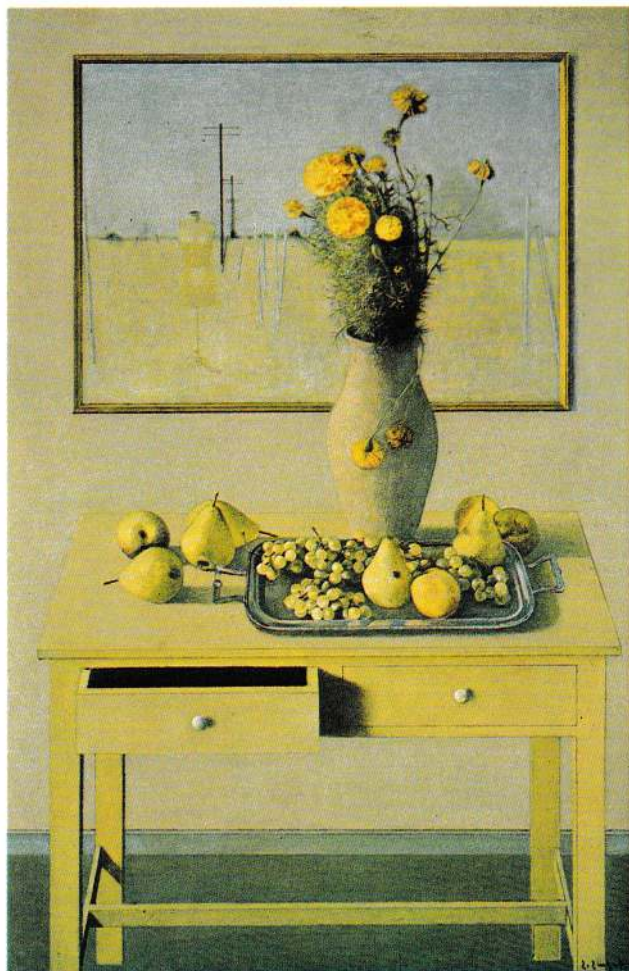
A number of international music and dance festivals, art exhibitions and other events to be held in the USSR within the framework of the Decade will certainly promote its lofty ideas. Some of the events have recently taken place or will be held soon, for in-

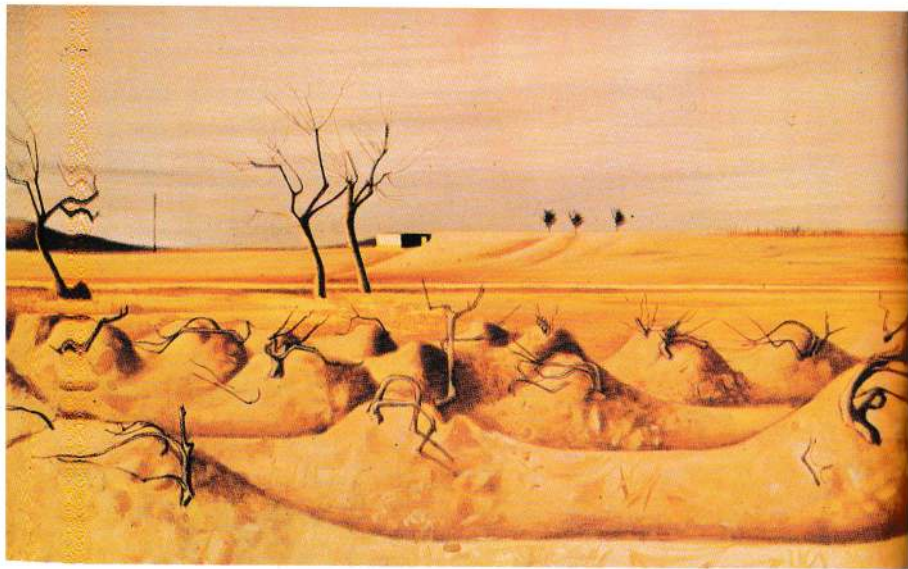
stance, an international conference of young writers, the 16th International Film Festival and an International Folklore Festival.

The USSR National Committee in support of the World Decade of Cultural Development was considering the idea of organizing in the Soviet Union a round-table discussion on "Culture and Development", an international symposium on art education for young, a world photographic exhibition under the motto "Europe Is Our Home", an international film festival and other events. Many of them are now successfully carried out.

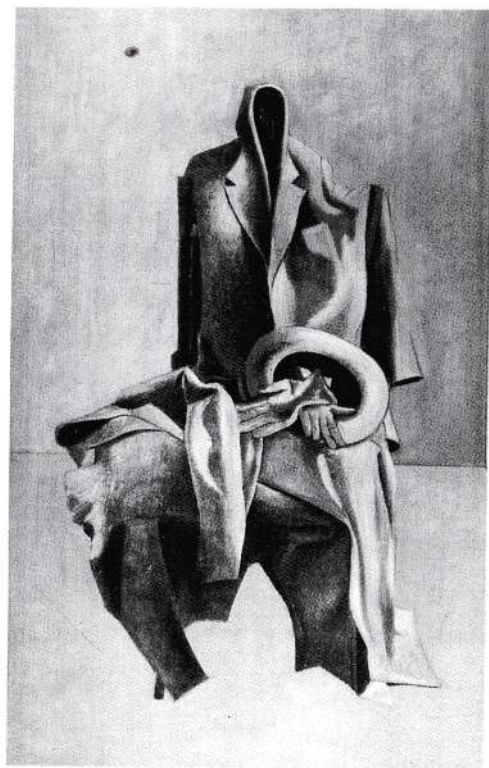
Akop AKOPIAN

Naturaleza muerta con frutas. 1982.





Paisaje.
1970.



En
memoria
de los
caídos.
1969.

Andréi VASNETSOV

Colgando ropa. 1960.





Naturaleza muerta con una gallina negra. 1955.



Musas. Composición
escultórica en la
fachada del Teatro
de Drama A. M.
Gorki, de la región
de Tula. 1970.

Iván LUBENNIKOV



Naturaleza
muerta
con un
gato y un
espejo.
1983.

Un recuerdo.
1987.

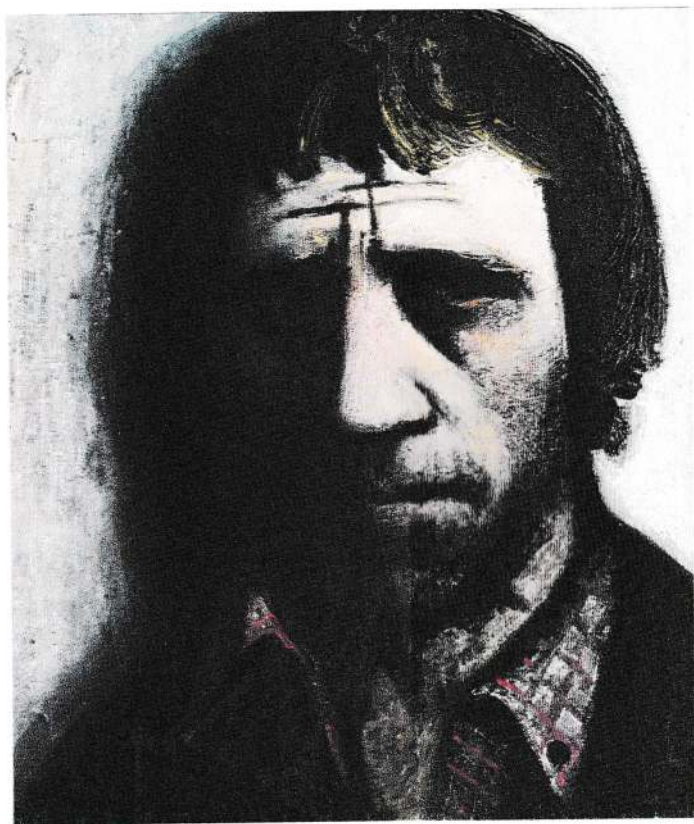




El pintor y su modelo. 1984.



Muerte de un
cancionista. 1980.

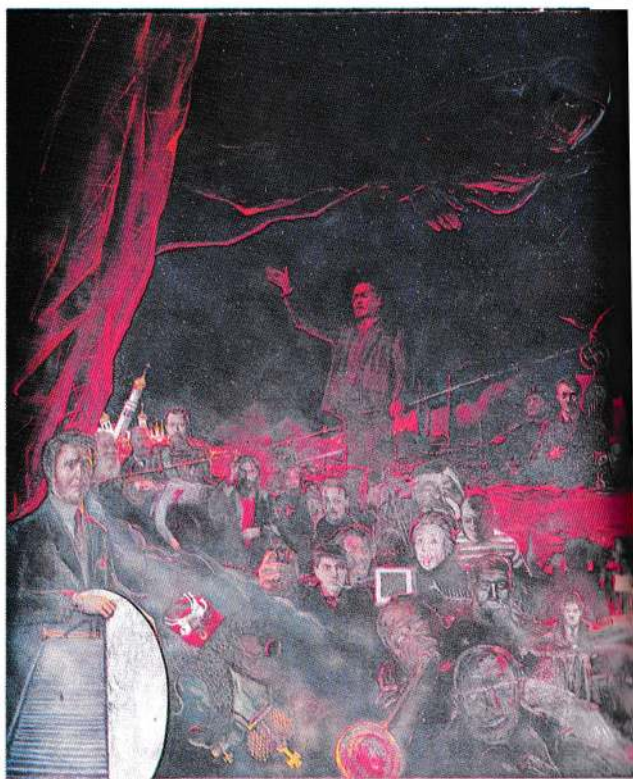


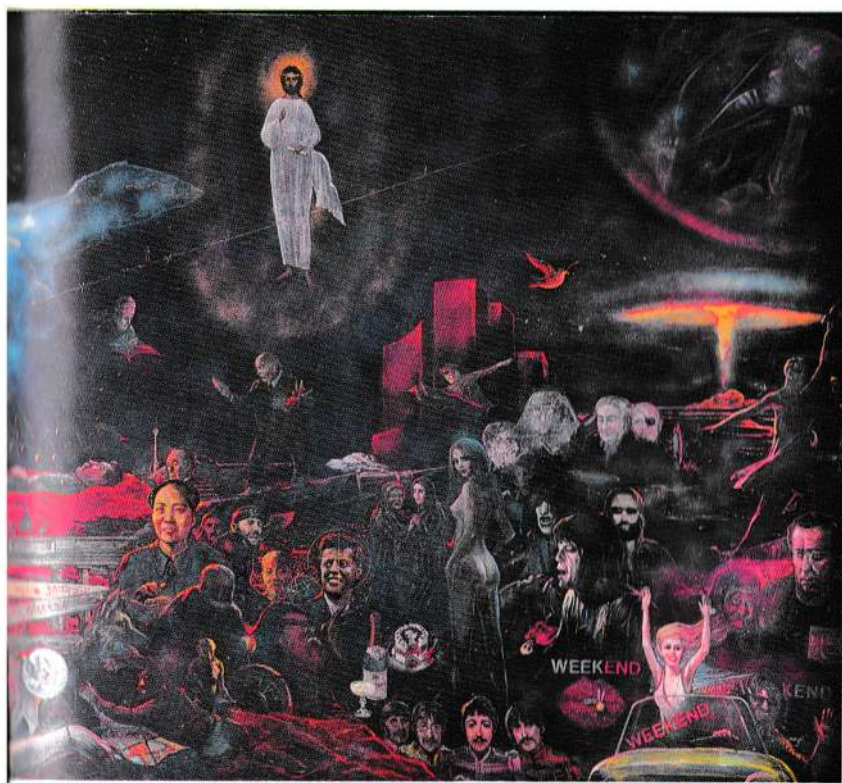
Vladímir Visotski. 1987.

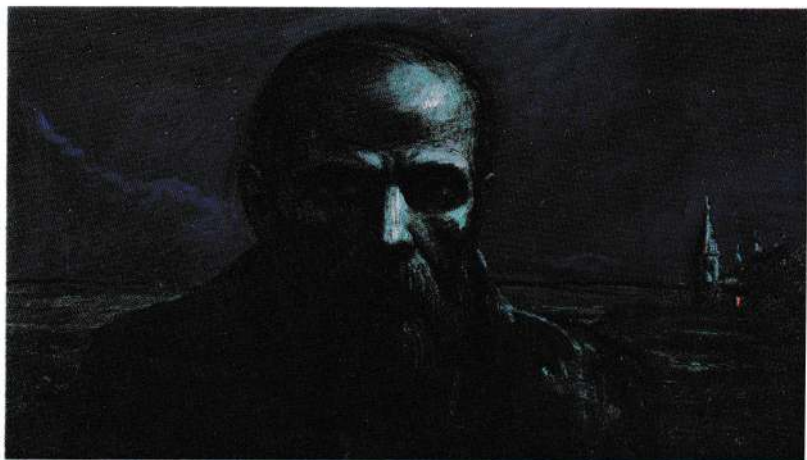
Или́а GLAZUNOV

Un Icaro ruso.

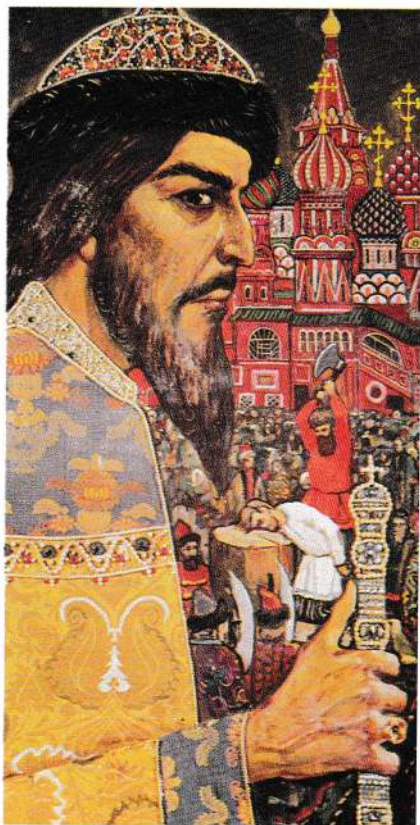
Misterio del siglo XX. 1972.







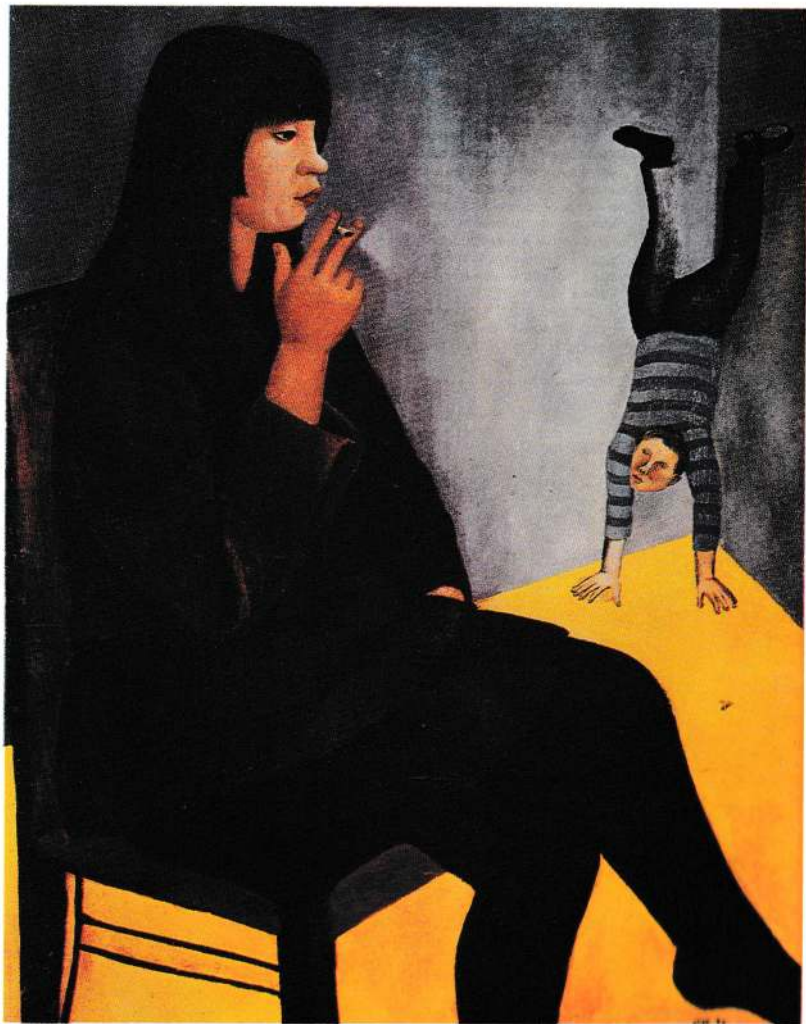
Fiódor Dostoyevski.



Iván el Terrible. 1974.

Tatiana NAZARENKO

Una actriz de circo. 1978.

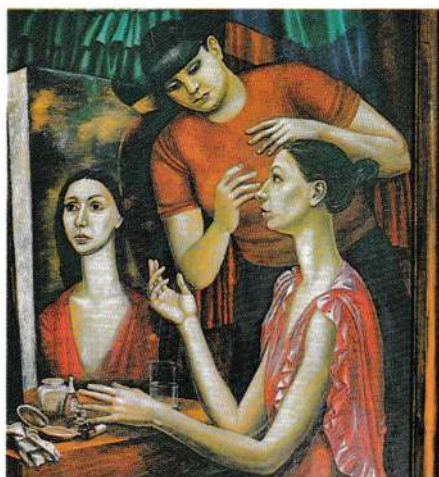
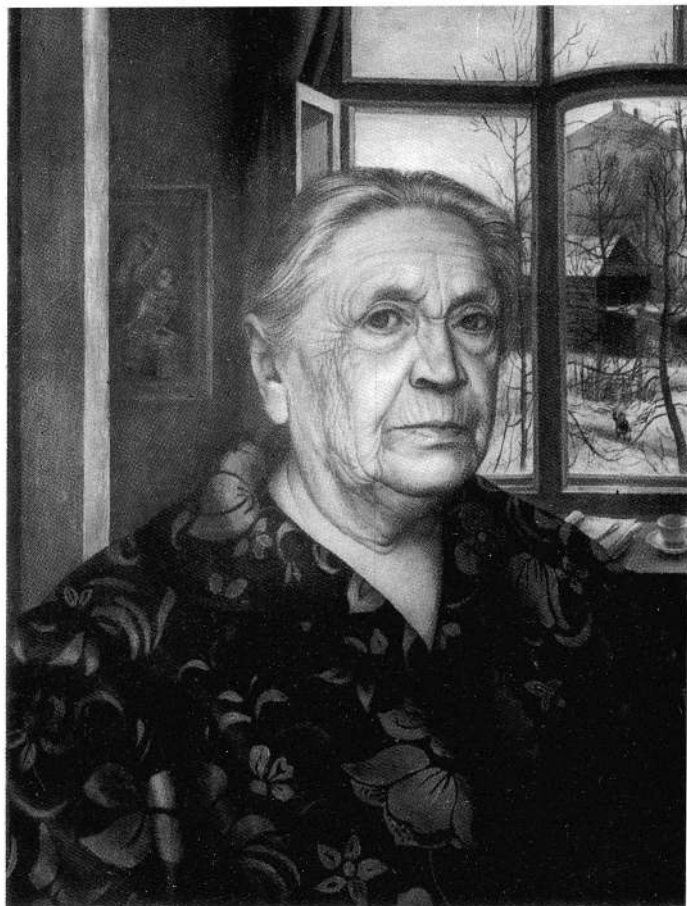




Atardecer en Moscú. 1978.

La última noche
en Bremen. 1988.





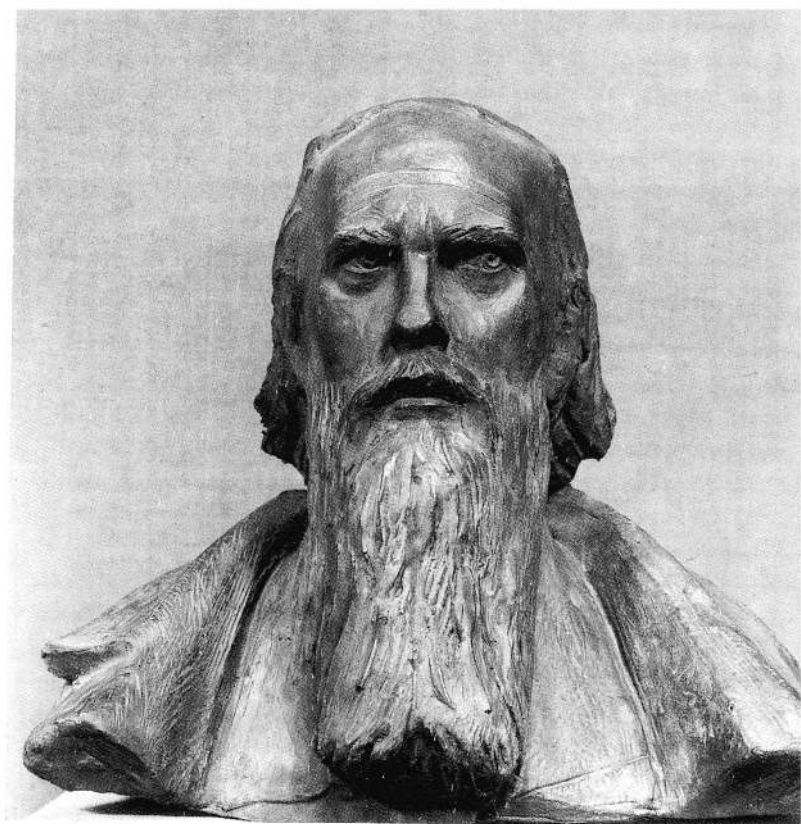
Retrato de mi
abuela. 1976.
(fragmento)

En el camarín.
1980.

Oleg KOMOV

Alexandr Pushkin y
Natalia Goncharova
(bronce). 1972.





Mijaíl Saltikov-
Schedrín (bronze).
1975.



Konstantín
Tsiolkovski (bronze).
1972.



Borís RIBCHENKOV

Moscú. Una tarde
lluviosa. 1984.

Un atardecer en el Kama.
1984.



LITERATURE:
traditions and
changes

SOVIET
LITERATURE
AND
ART

THE FINE ARTS:
an overview

